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The Trail of
The Golden Horn

H. A. CODY

By H. A. CODY

THE TRAIL OF THE GOLDEN
HORN

THE KING'S ARROW

JESS OF THE REBEL TRAIL

GLEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

THE TOUCH OF ABNER

THE UNKNOWN WRESTLER

UNDER SEALED ORDERS

IF ANY MAN SIN

THE CHIEF OF THE RANGES

THE FOURTH WATCH

THE LONG PATROL

ROD OF THE LONE PATROL

THE FRONTIERSMAN

THE TRAIL OF THE GOLDEN HORN

BY

H. A. CODY

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THE TRAIL OF THE GOLDEN HORN. III

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1 The Smokeless Cabin	9
2 A Night Vision	17
3 The <i>Tell-tale</i> Lock	27
4 To be Continued	37
5 Face to Face	47
6 Zell	57
7 Terrors of the Night	67
8 Hugo to the Rescue	76
9 Stains on the Snow	84
10 Lost	92
11 Where Strength Counts	99
12 Confession	109
13 The Rush of Doom	118
14 Life for Life	126
15 The Truce of the Storm	136
16 The Man of The Gap	145
17 The Trapper Arrives	155
18 A Cowardly Deed	166
19 Anxious Waiting	176
20 United Forces	186
21 Helping Hands	194
22 The Messenger	206
23 Rejected.	213
24 The Wages of Sin.	221

CHAPTER	PAGE
25 Maintien le Droit.	229
26 The Night Struggle	241
27 An Unfolded Record.	251
28 Waiting	261
29 Good News.	270
30 His Message of Farewell	279
31 Plans	287

The Trail of the Golden Horn

THE TRAIL OF THE GOLDEN HORN

CHAPTER I

The Smokeless Cabin

“**N**O Smoke!”

Hugo, the trapper, rasped forth these words upon the stinging air as he paused abruptly upon the brow of a steep hill. He was puzzled, and he rubbed the frost from his eyelids with his mittened right hand. Perhaps he had not seen aright. But no, he had not been mistaken. There, close to the river, stood the little cabin, nestling amidst a grove of young firs and jack-pines. But no smoke poured from the pipe stuck up through the roof.

“Strange! strange!” Hugo muttered. “There should be smoke. Bill Haines hasn’t moved overnight, that’s certain. Something must be wrong.”

His eyes swept the landscape to right and left. Everywhere stretched the vast wilderness of glistening snow, dark forests, and towering mountains. That long white streak, winding like a serpent, was the river, now frozen from bank to bank. From a few open places where the current was exceptionally swift vapour rose like dense clouds of smoke. Near one of these stood the cabin, for running water was a luxury

in the Yukon when winter gripped the land in its icy embrace.

Hugo hated the river, and always kept as far away as possible. To him it was a treacherous demon, and the great dark breathing-places seemed like yawning mouths ever open for new victims. That curling vapour appeared more sinister now than ever. He glanced again at the lonely cabin. Why was there no smoke rising above its squat roof? Had Bill Haines slipped while drawing water? Such a thing was not unlikely. But what about his wife? Surely she would keep the fire burning for the sake of herself and child. But had she gone, too, in attempting to rescue her husband?

For a few minutes Hugo stood there, his great form drawn to its full height. His long beard, covered with frost, swept his breast. His keen eyes peered out from beneath the big fur cap drawn well down over ears and forehead. He resembled a patriarch of Hebrew days who had stepped suddenly out upon one of nature's mighty stages. The dark, sombre trees formed a fitting background to the lonely figure, while the valley below and the limitless region beyond made a magnificent audience-chamber. But none witnessed the silent form upon the hill save, perhaps, a few shy, furry creatures of the wild, and ghosts of miners, prospectors, trappers and Indians, who once roamed the land and made the Yukon River their chief highway of travel.

Hugo, however, thought nothing of all this. His mind was agitated by conflicting thoughts. He longed to be off and away upon the trail, headed for the log abode of which he alone knew. But that smokeless cabin down by the river fascinated him.

"It's none of my business," he growled. "Bill Haines is nothing to me, so why should I worry about him? And yet, I wonder—"

He ceased abruptly, unslung a rope from his right shoulder, and turned swiftly around. At his heels lay the small toboggan he had been drawing, loaded with a couple of blankets, food, rifle, and a large lynx he had taken from one of his snares. He looked at these thoughtfully for a few seconds, and then reached for his rifle. This he carefully examined to be sure that the magazine was full. Picking up the dropped rope, he threw it again over his shoulder, and with rifle in hand, he sped rapidly down to the valley below. The long narrow snow-shoes creaked beneath his powerful strides, and the light snow flew from their curved points like spray from a cutter's bow.

Reaching the forest, he threaded his way among the trees and came out at length into the open space where stood the cabin. Here he stopped and looked carefully around. Seeing nothing, he once more advanced, and only slowed down when within a few yards from the building. He walked warily now, listening intently for any sound from within. Hearing nothing, he was about to place his ear close to the door when the faint wail of a child arrested his attention. Presently the cry subsided to a fretful whimper, and then all was still.

Feeling certain now that something was seriously wrong, Hugo glanced cautiously around. The snow near the cabin was beaten down hard, and a well-worn trail led to the river. He looked off to the place where the vapour was rising into the air, and shuddered. Why he did so he could not tell. Then he lifted the rude latch, pushed open the door and entered. The sun

shining in through the window on the south side of the building brightened the room. Hugo recalled the last time he had been there, and the pleasant welcome he had received. How clean and cosy the place was then, notwithstanding the meagre furniture and the bare floor. But now what a change! Everything was in disorder, the table overturned, the few rough, home-made chairs battered to pieces, and broken dishes lying on all sides. What did it mean? He stared around, greatly puzzled.

"Mam-ma! Mam-ma!"

The call came from a corner on the right. Turning quickly toward a bunk against the wall, Hugo saw the movement of a gray four-point blanket. Stepping forward, he stooped and beheld the face of a little child, its cheeks wet with tears. Big blue eyes looked expectantly up, and two small dimpled hands reached eagerly out, while a gurgle of delight rippled from soft, rosy lips. Instantly it realized its mistake. An expression of fear leaped into its eyes, the outstretched hands dropped, and the happy gurgle gave place to a cry of fright. Hugo was in despair.

"Queer mess I've got into," he muttered. "What am I to do with the kid? Pity it hadn't gone with its parents. I wonder what has happened to them, anyway?"

He looked around and noted more carefully the sad havoc which had been wrought. He was sure now that a terrible tragedy had been enacted there, either during the night or early that morning. Again he shuddered, and realized for the first time how cold was the room. In a few minutes he had a good fire burning in the sheet-iron heater, which fortunately had escaped destruction. Then he searched for some

suitable food for the child. But not a scrap could he find—every morsel had been taken from the house. Hugo uttered an angry oath and registered a solemn vow. Going outside he was about to draw his toboggan into the room when his eyes caught sight of peculiar marks upon the beaten snow. That they were blood stains he was certain, and there were others on the trail leading to the river.

Leaving the toboggan, and forgetting for a time the sobbing child, Hugo walked slowly along, keeping his eyes fixed upon the narrow path. At every step more stains appeared, which increased in number and vividness as he neared the shore. Out upon the ice he moved, and stopped only when close to the long, wide, yawning gulf. Here the river was exposed to view like a great artery from which the flesh has been torn. The water raced by like a mill-sluice, leaping forth from beneath its icy covering upstream to dash out of sight with a swish and a swirl half a mile or more farther down. Its murmur resembled the snarl of an angry beast when suddenly surprised or cheated of its prey. And yet Hugo felt certain that but a short time before it had been fed, when two victims had been enwrapped in its cold, merciless embrace. And one of them was a woman, whose little helpless child was now calling to her from the lonely cabin—and calling in vain!

And standing there, Hugo's soul suddenly became charged with an intense anger. Mingled with his hatred of the river was an overwhelming revulsion at the foul crime which had been committed. And who were the perpetrators? What reason could anyone have for committing such a diabolical deed? Haines and his wife were quiet reserved people, given to

hospitality, who never refused a meal or a lodging for the night to a passing traveller. During the summer Bill had rocked out gold from the river bars, and in winter had cut wood for steamers plying between Whitehorse and Dawson. That he made but a bare living Hugo was well aware, and he had often wondered why he was content to remain in such a lonely place.

Hugo turned these things over in his mind as he walked slowly away from the river. Reaching the cabin, he drew his toboggan into the building. The fire had been doing good work and the room was warm. The child, unable to cry more, was lying uncovered upon the blankets. It watched Hugo's every movement with wide, unblinking eyes.

"Don't be afraid, little chap," the man said. "I won't hurt you. I'm going to give you something to eat. Maybe that will make you friendly. I wonder how old it is, anyway," he mused. "It can't eat meat, that's certain. Liquids and soft food are the only thing for babies. Now, what in time can I give it! Ah, I know. Just the thing."

He turned and walked over to the toboggan. Throwing aside the blankets, he lifted a tin can, blackened from numerous campfires. This he placed upon the stove, removed the cover and looked in.

"Ptarmigan soup should be good for the little fellow," he remarked. "It's mighty lucky I didn't eat it all for breakfast. My! it's hot here."

He raised his hand as if to remove his fur cap, but suddenly desisted. Then he stepped outside and looked carefully around. Seeing no one, he went back into the cabin, took off his cap, and hung it upon one of the legs of the overturned table. The head thus exposed was covered with a wealth of hair, thickly streaked

with gray. The startling and outstanding feature, however, was one lock as white as snow, crowning the right temple. This was not due to age nor to any outward cause, but was evidently a family characteristic. Such a lock would have singled out the owner in any gathering for special and curious attention.

When the soup was warm enough, Hugo dipped out a portion into a tin cup which he carried over to where the child was lying.

"Come, little chap," he began, "here's something nice."

Forced by hunger the lad scrambled quickly to its knees, and drank eagerly from the cup held to its lips.

"More," he demanded when the last drop had been drained.

"Ho, ho, that's good!" Hugo chuckled, as he went back to the stove and dipped out another helping. "There's nothing like ptarmigan soup for an appetizer. I guess, my little man, you're older than I thought."

When the child had been fed to its satisfaction, Hugo sat down upon the edge of the bunk and gave himself up to serious thoughts. What was he to do with the boy? That was the question which agitated his mind. He could not keep him, that was certain. He must hand him over to someone who knew more about children than he did. But where could he take him? To whom could he turn for assistance? Swift Stream was out of the question. Besides being too far away it was the last place where he wanted to go. But what about Kynox? He did not want to go there, either. But it was nearer than Swift Stream, and less dangerous. Yes, it must be Kynox, and the sooner he got there the better.

He was staring straight before him as he thus made

up his mind. His eyes were fixed upon the rough whip-sawn planks which formed the floor. But he did not see anything in particular there. His thoughts were far away, so the cabin and all that it contained were for the time forgotten.

At length he became partially aware of a peculiar glitter upon the floor. The sun shining through the little window struck for a few minutes upon the spot where his eyes were resting. Gradually his interest became aroused. Something was there which caused that intense sparkle. Perhaps it was only a portion of a broken dish which had caught the sun's ray. But, no, it could not be. A piece of ordinary cup, saucer, or plate could not throw such a wonderful light. It was a sparkle such as he had once seen flashing from a jewelled finger of a woman of great wealth. He had never beheld the like since until now. Only one thing he knew could produce such a radiant effect.

Slipping from the bunk, he stepped quickly forward, dropped upon his knees, and peered keenly down. What he saw there caused him to reach swiftly out, seize and draw forth something wedged in a narrow crack between two of the floor planks. As he clutched this with the fingers of his trembling right hand, an exclamation of surprise burst from his lips.

It was a woman's diamond ring!

CHAPTER 2

A Night-Vision

FOR several minutes Hugo knelt there holding the ring in his right hand. It was a delicate circlet, a fragile wisp of gold to contain such an exquisite gem. What fair finger had it adorned? What eyes, looking down upon it, had rivalled its sparkling beauty? What comely cheeks had flushed in the joy of its possession? He felt sure that Mrs. Haines had not worn it. What use would such an ornament have been to her in that rude cabin? At any rate, he had never seen it upon her finger. Her hands, he had noted, were rough and toil-worn. But had she once worn it? Was it a precious keepsake, a memento of other and happier days? Had it in any way figured in the terrible tragedy which had so recently taken place? Why was it wedged in the crack between those two planks? Why had it not been broken and crushed in the terrible struggle that had ensued?

These were some of the thoughts which surged through Hugo's mind as he stared hard at the ring. The value of the diamond he did not know. That it was no ordinary stone he felt certain. How it gleamed and sparkled as he held it to the sun. He turned it over and over in his fingers. He was gradually becoming its slave. Its beauty was fascinating him; its radiance was dazzling him.

A sound from the bunk startled him. He glanced quickly and guiltily around like one caught in a criminal

deed. But it was only the child, chuckling as it tried to grasp a narrow beam of sunshine which fell athwart the blankets. With lightning rapidity Hugo thrust the ring into an inside pocket of his jacket and sprang to his feet. He stepped swiftly to the side of the bunk and glared down upon the child. Then a harsh, mirthless laugh burst from his lips. The perspiration stood out in beads upon his forehead.

"Hugo, you're a fool," he growled. "What has come over you, anyway? No more such nonsense."

He went to the door, opened it and looked out. The air cooled his hot brow. He felt better, and more like himself. He was anxious now to get away from that cabin. It was not good for him to be there—with the ring and the child. The place was polluted. Innocent blood had been shed in that room, and who could tell what might happen should he stay much longer? He had always scoffed at the idea of ghosts. But he did not wish to remain in that building overnight. He had a peculiar creeping sensation whenever he thought of it. He was not afraid of travellers who might call in passing. But he did have great respect for the Mounted Police, the redoubtable guardians of the north, the sleuth-hounds of the trails. Should they suddenly appear, he might find the situation most embarrassing. Alone with the child, and with the marks of a tragedy so evident, he might have difficulty in convincing them of his innocence in the affair. And should the ring be discovered upon his person, his position would be far from enviable.

Hugo's greatest fear, however, was of himself. He could not explain the reason, but so long as he remained in that cabin he could not feel responsible for his acts. A subtle influence seemed to pervade the place which

exerted upon him a magic effect. He had never experienced the like before. He must get away at once. Out upon the trail, battling against stern nature, he would surely regain his former self-mastery.

Hugo was not long in getting ready for his departure. He wrapped up the baby in a big fur-lined coat he found hanging on the wall. He hesitated when he realised that it was necessary to cast aside the lynx to make room for the lad upon the small toboggan. The pelt of the animal was valuable, but he could not afford to take the time to remove it. In fact, the lynx was of more use to him than the child. One he could sell for good money, while the other—well, he would be fortunate if he could give him away.

He thought of this as he tucked in the wee fellow, placing extra blankets about him to make sure that he would not be cold. According to the law of the country he was entitled to all the rights and privileges of the British Constitution. To take his life would be an indictable offense, and the punishment death if found out. But he could not be sold for money, and who would want him? Outside, someone might adopt him, or he could be placed in an Orphans' Home. But here on the frontier of civilisation who would wish to be bothered with such a helpless waif? The life of the lynx, on the other hand, was worth nothing in the eyes of the law. Any one could take it with impunity. But the animal could be sold for a fair price. What a paradox! A dead lynx worth more than a priceless child!

Hugo sighed as he picked up his rifle and drew the cord of the toboggan over his shoulder. It was a problem too profound for him to solve. Others would have to attend to that, if they so desired, while he

looked after the baby. Closing the cabin door, and turning his back upon the river, he headed for the uplands. Although he had no watch, yet he knew that it was past mid-day. The afternoon would be all too short, so he must make the most of it. Kynox was over thirty miles away, and a hard trail lay between. Under ordinary circumstances he could make the journey by a long day's march. But now he would be forced to travel slower and more carefully, and to halt at times to feed the child.

Hugo made his way along the trail down which he had sped a few hours before. Reaching the brow of the hill, he paused and looked back upon the cabin. It had a new meaning to him now. How grim and desolate it seemed. It was a building stained with human blood. Never again would it breathe forth its warm and inviting welcome to weary travellers. Soon word of the tragedy would be noised abroad. It would pass from man to man. In towns and villages, in miners' shacks, in Indian lodges, in wood-cutters' cabins, and in most remote recesses it would penetrate, to be discussed with burning indignation and heart-thrilling interest. The Mounted Police would arouse to swift and terrible action. They would throw out their nets; they would scour the trails; they would compass the world, if necessary, to bring the criminals to justice. They had done it before; they would do it again. No one yet had escaped their long and overwhelming grip.

And what of the little cabin? It would be shunned, looked upon with dread, a haunted abode. Oh, yes, Hugo was well aware how it would be. He knew of several such places scattered over the country, once the centres of life and activity, but now abandoned by the foot of man, white and Indian alike.

As he stood and rested, thinking of these things, something upon the river attracted his attention. At first it appeared as a mere speck, but it was moving. With breathless interest he strained his eyes across the snowy waste. He knew what it was—a dog-team! Was it the Police patrol? He shrank instinctively back, and unconsciously raised his right hand as if to ward off some impending danger. A low growl, almost like a curse, rumbled in his throat, as he turned and once more continued his journey.

His course now led inland, and in a few minutes the river was lost to view. The trail for a time wound through a forest of young firs and jack-pines, whose slender branches reached out like welcoming hands. He felt at home here and breathed more freely. Then the way sloped to a valley, and up a long wild meadow.

It was a magnificent region through which he was travelling. To the right rose great mountains, terrace above terrace, and terminating in majestic summits far beyond the timber-line. These, however, were surpassed by one towering peak far away in the distance. For years it had been his special guide. Others might be lost to view, but not the Golden Horn. It formed the subject of considerable speculation among miners, prospectors, and trappers. Its summit had never been reached. But daring adventurers who had scaled beyond the timber-line, solemnly affirmed that it was the real Mount Ararat. Embedded in everlasting snow and ice they had seen the timbers of a vessel of huge size and marvellous design, which they declared to be the ruins of Noah's ark.

Others believed that in that massive pile would be found a great mother-lode of precious gold. Its commanding peak, which from certain points of view re-

sembled a gigantic horn, caught and reflected the brief winter sun in a glow of golden glory. To eager eyes and hopeful hearts this was surely an outward sign of vast treasures within. But so far it had only served as a landmark, a gleaming guide to hardy rovers of the trails.

With the Golden Horn ever before him, Hugo pressed steadily onward. At times he glanced anxiously back, especially after he had crossed a lake or a wild meadow where the view of the trail was unobstructed. Seeing no one following, he always breathed a sigh of relief, and hurried on his way.

Darkness had already settled over the land when Hugo drew up at a little shack crouching in a dense thicket of firs and pines. This was one of his stopping-places in the large circle of his trapping region. The single room contained a bunk, a sheet-iron heater, a rough table, a block of wood for a seat, and a few traps. This abode was far from the main line of travel, and no head but the owner's had ever bent to pass its low portal.

Hugo paid careful attention to the child, looking after its welfare to the best of his knowledge. It had been remarkably good during the afternoon, and before it fell asleep upon the bunk it showed its friendliness to its rescuer by chuckling gleefully, holding out its hands, and kicking its feet in a lively manner.

For the first time in years Hugo's stern face relaxed. His eyes, hard and defiant, assumed a softer expression. All unconsciously the helpless child was exerting upon him a subtle influence; it was casting about him a magic spell, and breathing into the coldness of his heart a warm, stimulating glow.

And when the little lad at length slept, Hugo sat by

its side, gazing straight before him, silent and unseeing. Occasionally he aroused to replenish the fire, to snuff the single candle, to open the door to peer into the night, and to listen for sounds which did not come. He would then return to the bunk, to continue his watch and meditation.

About midnight he wrapped himself up in a thick blanket, stretched himself upon the floor near the heater, and in a few minutes was fast asleep. He awoke with a start, and sat bolt upright. He looked toward the bunk, and something there held him spellbound. The child, gently whimpering, was surrounded by a soft, peculiar light such as he had never seen before. Hugo wondered at this, for the candle was out and it was not yet daylight. As he stared, striving to comprehend the meaning, he saw the dim form of a woman bending tenderly over the child, her hands touching the little face. An involuntary gasp of surprise escaped his lips, and he rubbed his eyes to be sure that he was not dreaming. When he looked again all was in darkness. The vision had disappeared.

Rising quickly to his feet, Hugo struck a match and lighted the candle. His hands trembled as he did so, and his knees seemed unusually weak. He glanced furtively around the room as if expecting to see someone standing near. Then he went to the bunk and looked down upon the child. It was asleep! This was a surprise, for Hugo was certain that he had heard its whimper but a couple of minutes before. What did it all mean? Was it a dream from which he had been suddenly aroused: or had the mother really been bending over her child, and for a few fleeting seconds was revealed to mortal eyes? He had heard of such apparitions, but had always considered them as mere delu-

sions, the fanciful imagination of overwrought brains. Now, however, it was different. He had seen with his own eyes that form bending over the bunk, surrounded by a halo of no earthly light. Was it the child's mother? But perhaps it was an angel! At once there flashed into his mind the words of the Master over which he had often meditated.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

Little children, then, had angel guardians, so, perhaps, he had unwittingly surprised one this night in its ministry of love. Hugo was deeply impressed. A feeling such as he had not known for years stole into his heart. The room seemed suddenly transfigured. It was no longer a humble abode, but the dwelling-place of a celestial messenger. And the child was the cause of it all. For its sake the courts of heaven had been stirred, and swifter than light an angel had winged its way to that lone shack in the heart of the northern wilderness. It may have been hovering around that cabin near the river at the time of the tragedy. What part had it taken in protecting the child? It was wonderful, and Hugo's heart beat fast as these thoughts swept through his mind. Had the angel guided his steps to that smokeless cabin? He recalled how he had been on the point of taking another route that morning, but had suddenly changed his mind and gone to the river instead. Why he did so he could not tell, as he had never done the like before. But now he understood. It was the angel which had altered his course!

Hugo's mind dwelt continually upon this as he stirred up the fire and prepared his breakfast. He made

the tea exceptionally strong to soothe his nerves. After he had eaten his meagre meal, he filled and lighted his pipe. He then smoked and watched as the slow-footed hours dragged wearily by. He was anxious to be away upon his journey, but he did not wish to awaken the child.

Once he thrust his right hand into the inside pocket of his jacket and brought forth the ring. The diamond still fascinated him, though not as formerly. He was master of himself now, and could examine the precious gem more calmly. Its possession gave him a thrill of pleasure, even though he knew that it was not his. What would he do with it? An idea flashed into his mind, which caused him to glance toward the child.

"No, not now," he mused. "I must wait. It might get into wrong hands."

This decision seemed to satisfy him, so he replaced the ring, and continued his watch.

The dawn of a new day was stealing slowly over the land as Hugo resumed his journey. At noon he halted to feed the child, and to eat his own meal. Then up and on again through the short afternoon. He thought much of what had occurred during the night, and the vision he had beheld inspired him. His step was firmer and more decided than on the previous day. The coldness did not seem so intense, and the Golden Horn appeared to take on a brighter glow. When darkness enshrouded the land he again halted to feed the baby. This took but a short time, and once more he sped forward. Kynox was not far away, and he wished to make it that night.

Hour after hour he moved onward, though slower now, for the trail was heavy and he was becoming very weary. No longer did the Golden Horn direct his

course. But he had the north star to guide him. The Northern Lights were throwing out their long glittering streamers. They appeared like vast battalions marching and countermarching across the Arctic sky. Their banners rose, faded, vanished; to reappear, writhing, twisting, curling, and flashing forth in matchless beauty all the colors of the rainbow. Yellow and green, green and yellow, ruby-red and greenish-white, chasing one another, vieing with one another as the great, silent army incessantly retreated and advanced.

Hugo saw all this, and it never failed to arouse in him a feeling of wonder and awe. He watched the stars, too. For years they had been his steady companions on many a weary trail, and he read them like an open book. He saw the belted Orion swinging in its usual place, and the Great Bear dipping close to the horizon. He knew the time by the figures on that vast dial overhead. He peered keenly forward now, and at length he was rewarded by several faint lights glimmering through the darkness. Kynox was just beyond. In a few minutes the outlines of a number of buildings could be dimly discerned. These increased in clearness as he advanced. Ere long one larger than the others loomed up before him. He knew it well, and toward it he eagerly made his way.

CHAPTER 3

The Tell-Tale Lock

THE hour of midnight had just struck as Marion Brisbane opened a side door of the Kynox Hospital and entered. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes shone with animation. It was her night off duty, and she had enjoyed herself at Mrs. Beck's, the wife of the mining recorder. A few congenial friends had been invited, and most of the evening had been spent at bridge-whist. While refreshments were being served, Miss Risteen, the new teacher of the little school, had asked Marion why she had come so far north.

"For adventure, I suppose," had been the smiling and evasive reply.

"Have you found it?"

"Oh, yes."

"What! in a small hospital?"

"Certainly. It is there that we see so much of the tragedy of this country. Numerous trails lead into Kynox from various mining camps. You have no idea how many patients we receive during the year, though now we have only a few."

"But I mean adventure in the open," Miss Risteen had explained.

"Not much yet. But I have gone several times to outlying creeks to administer first-aid to injured men during the doctor's absence. He has been away for a

week now, so I never know when an urgent call may come."

"Do you always go yourself?"

"Yes, always."

Marion had then abruptly changed the subject, as she did not wish to be questioned further. Her friends had more than once remonstrated with her about her readiness and eagerness to go whenever a call came. They had urged her to let the other nurses bear their share of the hardships which such trips involved. But Marion had merely smiled, saying that she was selfish and enjoyed going to the camps. Not even to her nearest friends would she reveal the deep secret of her heart.

That which gave her the greatest pleasure, however, was a letter which Mr. Beck had handed to her during the evening. It had been given to him by a miner that afternoon who had come in from the outer trails to record a claim. At the first glance Marion knew whom it was from, and it was this which caused the flush upon her face and the light of joy in her eyes as she entered the hospital. She was anxious to reach her own room where she could read the letter to her heart's content.

She had just closed and locked the door, when the night nurses appeared.

"Oh, Miss Brisbane," the latter began, "we have had a lively time since you left."

"Nothing wrong, Miss Wade, I hope," Marion somewhat anxiously replied.

"That remains to be seen. About ten o'clock an old man, with a great flowing beard, brought in a little child."

"Sick?"

"No, nothing the matter with it."

"Why did he bring it here, then?"

"For us to keep. He has given it to us."

"Given it to us!" Marion stared at the nurse in surprise.

"That is what he said," and Miss Wade smiled.

"Why, he made himself at home here, and took possession at once."

"Do you mean to tell me that he is here now?" Marion demanded.

"He certainly is, and with all of his belongings. He has taken up his abode in the kitchen, and is asleep on the floor, wrapped up in his blankets. He has his toboggan there, too. Just think of that!"

"But why didn't you send him away?"

"He wouldn't go. I told him we couldn't keep him; that this was a hospital, and not a hotel. But it didn't make any difference. He said that this was good enough for him."

"What impudence! Why didn't you send for me? Mr. Beck and the other men would have come over and put the man out."

"Oh, I didn't want to bother you. And besides, he seemed so harmless. He just wanted the kitchen, so I couldn't very well object."

"Where is the baby?" Marion asked.

"Asleep in my room. I gave it a bath, which it certainly needed, and something to eat. He is a dear little fellow, and I am fond of him already."

"Who is the man, anyway? Did he tell you anything about himself, or where he came from?"

"He only said that he found the child in a cabin along the river about a mile from the C. D. Cut-Off. He would tell me nothing more."

"Then the baby is not his," Marion said. "It is strange that he should bring it here. I wonder why he didn't take it to Swift Stream."

"I asked him that," Miss Wade replied, "but he told me he wasn't travelling that way. He is certainly an odd man, a giant in stature, and with wonderful eyes which seem to look right through one. He kept his cap on all the time, pulled down over his ears, even though the kitchen was very warm. I believe he went to sleep with it on. Suppose you have a look at him."

"Very well," Marion agreed. "I am somewhat anxious to see our strange guest."

Together they passed out of the room into the hallway, and made their way to the door leading into the kitchen. This was closed, but Miss Wade softly opened it and peeked in.

"There he is," she whispered. "He's sound asleep."

A lamp, partly turned down, emitted sufficient light for Marion to see the covered form lying upon the floor, with the toboggan nearby.

"He's got his cap on, all right," Miss Wade again whispered, suppressing with difficulty a giggle of amusement. "Isn't it funny? He must use it for a night-cap."

Marion motioned her to be silent, as she closed the door and led the way back along the hallway. She, too, saw the humor of the situation, although as matron she had to maintain the dignity of her position.

After she had taken a look at the baby which was sleeping soundly, she went to her own room. Here she opened the letter she had been carrying in her hand, and ran her eyes rapidly over the contents.

"Dear Miss Brisbane," it began.

"I am on my way to Lone Creek to bring in Scotty

Ferguson, who met with an accident. Please have a room ready for him. Constable Rolfe is with me. We should reach Kynox at the end of this week. I am sending this note by Joe Dart, who is going to town to record a claim.

"Hoping to see you soon,

"Very sincerely yours,

"JOHN NORTH,

"Sergeant, R. N. M. P."

That was all the letter contained in mere words, yet to Marion it meant a great deal more. She saw the writer, the strong, manly sergeant, who had made such a deep impression upon her. She recalled the last time he had been at Kynox when he had brought in a sick miner from an outlying creek. She had heard much about John North, the great trailsman and the fearless defender of law and order. Many were the tales told of his prowess to which Marion always listened with keen interest and a quickening of the heart. To her he was the very embodiment of the ideal hero, and one with King Arthur's Knights of the Table Round. He was ever moving from place to place, bringing relief to the afflicted and redressing human wrongs. What a difference between this man and many of the men she had met. He was not in the country for gain, but in the noble service of his King and country. Her mind suddenly turned to the strange, long-bearded man asleep on the kitchen floor. What a contrast between him and John North. Who was he? she wondered, and where had he found the child? She thought, too, of his oddity in wearing his cap all the time. Was there some reason for this? Did it cover some scar or other disfigurement?

As she asked herself these questions, an idea flashed into her mind which caused the blood to fade from her cheeks and her hands to tremble. She tried to banish the notion as she replaced the letter into its envelope and laid it upon a small table by her bed. But the idea would persist in returning until she could no longer resist its appeal.

For the space of a half-hour she debated with herself as to what she should do. Perhaps it would be better to wait until morning before seeing the man again. This, however, did not satisfy her. Several times she started to open the door, but each time drew back, uncertain and agitated. She was no coward, yet the thought of what might be revealed unnerved her. Nevertheless, she knew that the ordeal must be faced sooner or later. For that she had come north, and with one object in view she had visited numerous creeks and mining camps. But never before had such a nameless dread overwhelmed her. She had searched eagerly, and hopefully, studying with the closest scrutiny the one face which would reward all her efforts.

At length feeling that she could delay no longer, she left her room, and sped along the hallway. She felt guilty, almost like a thief, as she pushed open the kitchen door and looked in. The man was evidently sound asleep, for he was lying in the same position as when she first saw him. Creeping close to his side, she stooped and listened. Yes, he was asleep and breathing heavily. Reaching swiftly out, she lifted the peak of his cap, and at once the white lock of hair was exposed to view. Marion had seen enough. She turned and fled out of the kitchen, along the hall, and back to the shelter of her room. Here she stood, wide-eyed and panting like a hunted creature. She had

reached the end of her quest. That for which she had been seeking she had found. But what a bitter disappointment! How she had looked forward to such a moment. It had arrived, passed, and she was left helpless, bewildered.

Sinking down upon the only chair the room contained, she endeavored to compose her mind that she might view the affair in as clear a light as possible. That the man lying in the kitchen was her father she had not the slightest doubt. That white lock of hair betrayed him, if nothing else. It was a family characteristic, and she alone of several generations had escaped the distinctive mark. How proud the Brisbanes had always been of their peculiar feature, and when no trace of it appeared in Marion's luxuriant hair they had been greatly disappointed. The "Brisbane lock" was a common expression. It had its origin, so it was believed, in a great battle. A Brisbane in defending his King had received a sword cut on his forehead which left a gaping wound. When this healed, instead of an unsightly scar, the hair came out as white as snow. For years after that lock was a sign of royal favor, and a white lock formed the important feature of the family coat-of-arms. "Remember the Brisbane lock," parents had admonished their children through many generations. It had always been to them a standard, a sign of almost divine favor. They had tried to live up to the ideal set by their worthy ancestor on the field of battle. Through all the years only one Brisbane had brought reproach upon the name and the lock. And that man had fled from home and justice, a wretched outcast.

Marion was but a girl of twelve at that time, and she loved her father with all the ardor of her passion-

ate nature. Nothing could make her believe the charge of forgery which was preferred against him. There had been some mistake, she was certain, and he had been basely wronged. Some day he would be proven innocent, the guilty ones exposed, and the Brisbane name cleared of infamy. Her mother believed the same, and thus through the years the two waited in patient hope. But they waited in vain. The exile did not return, so his deed remained a part of the history of the little town, and a blot upon the family escutcheon.

Ten years passed and no word from the absent one reached the mother and daughter. They knew, however, that he must be alive, for regularly twice a year money reached them through a local bank. It was a liberal amount, deposited to their credit, although the circumstances surrounding it were not divulged. But they were certain who sent it, and it was a steady reminder to them that he was in the land of the living and might one day return. Mrs. Brisbane cherished this hope until the last, and ere she died she expressed the wish that Marion should search diligently for her father. This the girl willingly agreed to do, for the idea had been lodging in her own mind for some time.

In order to carry out her design, Marion became a nurse. The west called to her, for she firmly believed that there her father had gone. After practising for two years in a city on the Pacific coast, she responded to an appeal from the far north. The new hospital at Kynox was in need of nurses, and she was at once placed in charge. It was a position of considerable responsibility, but she fulfilled her duties in a highly creditable manner. Her charming disposition, and her readiness to sacrifice herself for others, won all hearts.

Old miners and prospectors, especially, appealed to her, for she was always hopeful that among them she would find her father. How eagerly her eyes searched every new face she met, and sought for the tell-tale lock. Men noted this earnest look, and often commented upon it among themselves. To them Nurse Marion was an angel of mercy, and even the roughest among them always spoke of her with the greatest respect.

Marion enjoyed her work and life in the northland. But never for a moment did she lose sight of her great quest. At times she almost despaired of ever finding her father. It was a vast land, and she was able to meet but a few of the miners and prospectors. How could she ever find the one for whom she was so eagerly seeking?

The image that Marion had kept in her mind of her father was a beautiful one. She remembered him as a man of fine appearance, of more than ordinary stature, with a strong, noble face. How proud she had always been when walking by his side, for then Thomas Brisbane was the leading citizen of Garthroy. She expected to find him the same years later. She was, therefore, totally unprepared to see her father in the long-bearded, and unkempt creature, content with the kitchen floor for his bed. What would her two assistant nurses think should she divulge the secret? And the people of Kynox—for there was a social clique even in this wilderness town—what would they say?

Hour after hour Marion battled with her doubts and fears. The night seemed unbearably long, and yet she dreaded for morning to come. Something then would have to be done. Should she let her father go without telling him who she was? And if she did tell, how would he receive the news? Would he rejoice in

meeting his daughter again? or would he flee from her presence? Her brain was in a whirl, and she walked up and down her little room, torn by conflicting emotions.

Toward morning a desire came to her to go to her father and speak to him. If there should be an embarrassing scene it would be better to be with him alone than to have other nurses around. Her courage almost failed her as she left her room and hurried once more along the hallway. She was glad that the night nurse was nowhere in sight, as she did not wish to meet her just then. Reaching the kitchen door, she pushed it open and looked in. She started and glanced around the room. There was no one there. Her father was gone!

CHAPTER 4

To Be Continued

FOR two days Marion Brisbane lived in a world of doubt and uncertainty. She was in a quandary. She had found her father, only to lose him again. Should she go in search of him? But where would she go? How could she find him? To whom could she turn for advice and help? How could she explain the reason of her search without telling who the man really was? And this she did not wish to do, for the present, at least. This problem agitated her mind as she went mechanically about her work. The child had been taken by a man and his wife who had no children of their own, and were strongly drawn to the little waif of the night.

When the story of the old man's visit to the hospital and his sudden disappearance leaked out, it caused much comment in Kynox. Several surmised that it was Hugo, the wanderer of the trails, the peculiar trapper about whom they had heard much, although few had ever seen him. From the earliest days mystery has always delighted the human mind. Strange characters, noted for their peculiar ways, and endowed with great strength, have ever made special appeal. They give a spice, a thrill to life, and remove some of its monotonous drabness. No race, no age, has ever lacked some mysterious being about whom many legendary tales gather. This was true in a way of Hugo, the

trapper. Where he had come from no one knew. He had no settled abode, being in one place to-day and miles away on the morrow. He had been known to appear suddenly at some mining camp with an injured prospector and vanish again into the wilderness. He was as elusive as a shadow, and just as intangible. He was terrible in a fight, so it was asserted, and he was the only creature of which the grizzlies, the dread of the trails, were afraid. His latest act in bringing in the little child stirred up afresh the numerous stories concerning his mysterious life.

Marion had heard some of these tales before, but had taken no special interest in them until now. She had concluded that the trapper was some great uncouth creature, half man and half beast by nature, who had lived most of his life in the wilderness. But never for an instant had he meant anything to her. That such a being could be the one for whom she was so anxiously seeking was beyond the bounds of her wildest imagination. Now she knew, and she listened with fast-beating heart to every scrap of information concerning the trapper. She concealed her feelings as much as possible, although when alone in her own room she would pace excitedly to and fro; her mind rent by wild, conflicting emotions. That she must see him again was the burden of her thoughts. To find him she had come north, and she must not give up until she had accomplished her purpose.

The second evening after Hugo's arrival a startling story drifted into Kynox from Swift Stream. It told of the murder of Bill Haines, his wife, and little child near the C. D. Cut-Off. Two miners on their way down river had stopped at the cabin, found signs of a fierce struggle, and marks of blood leading to the

river. They had reported the affair to the Mounted Police at the first station they reached, so the news was at once flashed to headquarters at Swift Stream, over the single wire running from Ashcroft to Dawson.

This was most disturbing news to the people of Kynox, and their thoughts naturally turned to the little child which had been brought to the hospital by Hugo, the trapper. Did the latter know anything about the murder? they asked one another. What was he doing with the child? and why had he left so mysteriously in the night? It was very strange and suspicious, they reasoned, that he had reported nothing, and had given no word of explanation. It was surely the Haines' child he had brought to Kynox, so he must know something about the terrible affair near the Cut-Off.

Marion was now more disturbed than ever. Outwardly she was very calm as she answered the numerous questions about the night visitors. She merely related what the night nurse had told her, and made no mention of her own first secret visit to the kitchen. She was determined not to divulge that. But fearful thoughts would persist in forcing themselves into her mind. Had her father committed that terrible deed? Anyway, if he knew anything about it why had he not reported at once? Her father a murderer! The idea was almost unbearable. She could not believe it. No Brisbane would ever descend to such depths. But her father would be suspected. The Police would hear about his visit to the hospital with the child, and of his sudden departure in the night. They would track him, find him, and bring him to trial. Would he be able to clear himself? to prove that he was innocent?

Marion thought of all this and a great deal more during the rest of the week. She found it difficult to sleep, for she would awake in the middle of the night overwhelmed with a presentiment of impending disaster. Saturday came, and also Sergeant John North. He and Rolfe brought the injured miner to the hospital, and when the constable had left, North remained. Marion thought that he had never looked so handsome as when he stood before her that afternoon, clad just as he had come from the trail. He was a noble specimen of a man, well-built, and over six feet in height. His face, bronzed and weather-beaten, was strong, and his mouth and chin firm. His face was smooth-shaven, for Sergeant North was careful of his personal appearance, particularly so whenever he visited Kynox. His eyes, grey and steady, were never known to flinch from danger. When they glowed with anger or indignation, as they did on special occasions, their owner was a man to be feared. But now they shone with a tender expression as they rested upon Marion Brisbane's slightly flushed face.

Sergeant North was a reserved man, and little accustomed to the company of women. Years on the frontiers of civilization had brought him into contact with many stern realities of life. Surrounded by the ruggedness and the grandeur of nature in every possible form, he had gradually and unconsciously become moulded by its mystic influence. The ways of polite society were to him a closed book, and the petty social chatter made no appeal. He loved the open, the great spaces, and the winding trails. The iron of the land had entered into his being, and the silent, mysterious alchemy of the north affected his soul like magic. Combined with all these subtle influences was the law

of the Force he served. It was Duty first and last. "Maintien le Droit" was the motto of this wonderful body of men, and the code written in the little red manual was stern and stripped of all useless verbiage. It told without a shadow of a doubt what was expected, and the instructions were to be followed to the letter. This suited Sergeant North. He loved the life, and never once had he swerved one hair's breadth from the strict line of duty.

His was not an impressionable nature, and he was always shy in the presence of women. But when Marion Brisbane crossed his path it was altogether different. She inspired him with confidence, his shyness vanished, and he could talk freely. Out upon the trails a vision of her was ever before him, and he always counted the days until he could see her again. So standing before her this afternoon in the hospital, he feasted his soul upon her face, lips, eyes, and hair. He did not want to talk; it was heaven enough to be near her, and to revel in her beauty. Whatever Sergeant North did it was with his whole might. He threw himself unreservedly into every undertaking. He was a hard trailsman, a stern fighter, when fighting was necessary, and now for the first time in his life he was a great lover.

Marion's eyes dropped beneath North's ardent gaze, and she became somewhat embarrassed. Neither spoke, and for a few seconds intense silence reigned. Then they both smiled and the tension was broken.

"Forgive me for keeping you standing," Marion apologized. "It is very stupid of me. Come in here," and she opened a door on her right.

"I have not long to stay," North explained, as he followed her into the little sitting-room, and seated

himself in a comfortable chair which Marion offered. "There is very serious business ahead. You know to what I refer."

"You mean the murder near the C. D. Cut-Off, I suppose," Marion replied as she seated herself near the window. "I have heard of it."

"And you had a visit from Hugo, the trapper, I understand."

"Oh, yes. He brought a little child here one night."

"Where is the child now?"

"With Mr. and Mrs. Parker. They have taken it as their own, and are very fond of it."

Sergeant North gazed thoughtfully out of the window for a few seconds. He was really looking at the peak of the Golden Horn far away in the distance, although he saw it not. His mind was upon more important things.

"Are you certain that it was Hugo, the trapper, who brought that child here?" he asked.

"No, I am not," Marion emphatically replied, "but it is the general opinion in Kynox that he is the man."

"Did he wear his cap while he was in the hospital?"

"Yes, even when he was asleep on the kitchen floor."

"Then it was Hugo, all right; I never saw him without his cap."

"Why does he always wear it?"

"I do not know."

Marion's hands were clasped upon her lap, and although her eyes were downcast she knew that the sergeant was looking intently upon her face. The next instant he had reached out and caught both of her hands in his. With a slight cry of surprise, Marion tried to free her hands, but the sergeant held them firm.

"Don't, don't," she gasped as she struggled to her feet. "You must not do that; it isn't right."

"Love makes it right," North replied, as he also rose. "Marion, I love you, and I want you to know it. I am a man of few words, and not used to love-making language. But I must tell you. I cannot restrain myself any longer."

He ceased, drew her to him, and his lips met hers. No longer did Marion contend, for a happiness such as she had never known swept over her. She felt North's strong arms about her, holding her close. Neither spoke. It was enough that they were together, so words were unnecessary.

Gently at length Marion freed herself from her lover's embrace, and stood before him with flaming cheeks.

"I never imagined that you loved me so much," she murmured. "It seems like a wonderful dream."

"It is no dream," North assured, "it is the glorious reality. I was afraid that you didn't love me, but I had to tell you to-day, for I might not see you again for some time."

"What! are you going away?"

"Yes, in a short time, just as soon as the dogs get rested a little. There is serious work ahead, and I must not delay."

"In connection with the murder?"

"Yes. Hugo is the man I want. He is either the murderer, or he has information which I need. But he is a nasty man to face, and there may be trouble."

"Oh! do you think so?" The color faded somewhat from Marion's cheeks. She had to think of two now. How terrible it would be if her father and her lover should meet in a deadly encounter! She longed to tell

North of the discovery she had made. If he knew that Hugo was her father, would he let him escape for her sake? But how could she tell him? What would he think of her for trying to divert him from the strict line of duty which she understood he had always followed?

These thoughts flashed through her mind with lightning rapidity as she stood there. North noted the troubled expression in her eyes, and attributed it to her interest on his behalf.

"You must not worry about me," he told her. "I am well able to take care of myself."

"But I am thinking about the trapper," Marion truthfully explained. "I do not believe that he is the murderer. Why should he have brought that little child here if he had murdered its parents? Would he not have killed it, too, and fled to the wilderness? Have you thought of that?"

"Indeed I have," was the emphatic reply, "and it is that which puzzles me. But Hugo is a strange character, and always does just the opposite from what one would expect. He may have brought the child here in order to deceive us."

"But no one would have suspected him," Marion insisted. "He could have murdered the parents and child and thrown their bodies into the river. What reason did he have for saving the child and bringing it here? Would you have suspected him of the deed?"

"Not at first, perhaps, but eventually we would have suspected him. It is utterly impossible for any man to escape in a country such as this. So far, every criminal has been brought to justice, no matter to what part of the world he fled. But, there, let us forget Hugo at present. I shall have enough of him before long. It

is of you alone I want to think, Marion. Your love means more to me than anything else. And you do love me, don't you? The assurance from your lips will send me forth upon my quest with renewed energy. I shall hasten the task, knowing that the sooner it is accomplished, the sooner I shall return to you."

The sergeant was about to reach out his arms once more to draw Marion toward him, when a step along the hallway caused him to hesitate. He retreated a couple of steps, and thus the two were standing facing each other in a most formal manner as a nurse appeared at the door.

"Excuse me, Miss Brisbane," she began, "but a man has just arrived from Big Chance for the doctor. A miner has been seriously injured, and needs medical aid."

"Where is the man who brought the news?" Marion questioned, now all attention.

"He has gone to look after his dogs," was the reply. "I told him the doctor was away, but that we are expecting him back soon. He asked if one of the nurses could go, as the case is very urgent. He said that he could not take his own dogs out again, as they are almost exhausted with travelling day and night. I wonder what can be done."

"I must get a team and go at once," Marion emphatically declared. "I have gone before, so can do it again. Tell Miss Wade to prepare my outfit, as she knows what I shall need. I know where I can get a good team of dogs, so shall look after that myself."

When the nurse had gone, Marion turned to the sergeant. Her eyes shone with animation and her face expressed determination.

"You will have to excuse me," she simply said.

"'Duty first' is the law here as well as in the Force. I must get ready at once."

"Suppose you travel with me," North suggested. "I am bound for Big Chance, and nothing on earth would please me better than to have you along. I shall order Rolfe to have the dogs ready in an hour's time. They are a great team, and can make the trip faster than any dogs you can get in Kynox. I am sure we shall enjoy the run together. Rolfe, too, will be delighted to have a woman along. He will regale you with poetry of which his head is full. He is an excellent fellow, for all that, and as true as steel."

"I think it will be splendid to go with you," Marion emphatically replied. "It will not take me long to get ready. As for poetry, Mr. Rolfe can quote to his heart's content. I shall enjoy it, I am sure."

"But what about the important matter we were discussing when the nurse arrived? I am hungry for your answer. You surely have it ready."

"Oh, that's to be continued, like they say about a story," Marion smilingly replied.

"On the trail?"

"Perhaps so."

"And the conclusion?"

Marion paused as she was about to leave the room. Her thoughts flashed to the murder, and her suspected father. The troubled expression returned to her eyes as she turned them upon her lover's face.

"The conclusion can only come after several more chapters have been written," she quietly replied. "All depends upon the nature of those chapters. You must be patient and wait."

CHAPTER 5

Face to Face

A LEADEN sky and a wind increasing in intensity presaged a coming storm. It had been threatening since morning, and although Sergeant North knew that he could not outstrip it, yet he hoped to reach Big Chance before the trail became too heavy. The dogs were in fine trim, better than he had ever seen them. They seemed to realize the importance of the mission upon which they were bent, and the special need for haste. They sped along the narrow, winding trail, through forests, across inland lakes, up dreary stretches of wild meadows, and over desolate tracts, where trees withered by fire stood stark and bare. Pedro, a noble Malamute, long and lithe as a wolf, was the leader. Five of his companions were full-blooded huskies, of the Mackenzie River breed, surly and treacherous, but great workers. John, the wheel-dog, was the only mongrel, lazy, but of enduring strength and speed when forced by the stinging lash. For such a team of seven able and hardened brutes the load they drew retarded them but little. At times the sergeant, who guided the sled, and the constable, who followed after, found it all they could do to keep pace with the fleet animals.

Seated upon the sled, and well wrapped in robes and blankets, Marion Brisbane thoroughly enjoyed the trip through the wilderness. Never before had she been drawn by such a noble team of dogs, and she never

wearied watching them as they loped forward. Added to this, was the presence of the man who had avowed his love the day before. Although she could not see his face, she could feel his presence as he towered above her at his watchful task of directing the sled. His right hand held the whip, but only when the wheel-dog lagged would the lash split the air like a pistol shot. There was little chance for conversation. The lovers were happy, so words did not signify.

They had made good progress the previous afternoon, and had reached the little road-house at the Forks, about twenty miles from Kynox, several hours after dark. Here they had spent the night, and were up and on their way early in the morning. From here to Big Chance the only stopping-place was a police patrol-house. This was free to prospectors, miners, and other travellers, with the distinct understanding that no damage was to be done, and if they were forced to use any of the provisions stored there they were to report it to the police as soon as possible. This was a strict law, and it was always obeyed to the letter.

At first Sergeant North hoped to make Big Chance without stopping at the patrol-house. He could not afford the delay if they were to reach their destination that night. But when the storm came upon them just after they had eaten their frugal meal in the shelter of a little clump of trees, he was forced to give up the idea of gaining the mining camp that night. They would do well to reach the patrol-house.

They were passing through a wooded region when the snow began to fall, and it dropped gently and harmlessly upon their bodies. The flakes were small, easily brushed aside, and in no wise interfered with their progress. But the roaring of the wind overhead

and the swaying of the tree-tops told of the tempest that was raging outside.

"Suppose we camp here," Rolfe suggested. "It's a nasty storm, and we'll hit a bad trail ahead over the burnt land."

"But we can make it, all right," North replied. "We don't want to spend the afternoon and night here. We're travelling light, remember, with very little grub for ourselves, and none for the dogs. There's plenty at the patrol-house ahead, so we must make that. This storm may last for a couple of days."

Rolfe saw the wisdom of the sergeant's words, and lapsed into silence as he plodded steadily on. Ere long the trail led out of the woods into the open on a small lake. Here the wind showed some of its force, and swirled the light snow about their forms. But it was only after they had passed through another grove of trees and reached the burnt land did they feel the full sweep of the storm. Here thousands of rampikes stood gaunt and naked. Among these the snow was driving like millions of lances of the great unseen legions of the northland. The dogs flinched and whined as the tempest struck them. Even North and Rolfe were compelled to turn their faces from the stinging fury of the icy darts, while Marion was forced to cover her head completely with the fur rug.

"Can we make it?" Rolfe gaspingly asked. "This is terrible!"

"We must," North replied. "We can't stay here, and we can't go back. Get out the snow-shoes, for the trail's already full."

With the snow-shoes donned, North spoke to the crouching dogs. But for the first time in their lives they refused to obey their master's command.

"Mush on," the sergeant roared as the long lash snapped and sizzled around their ears and flanks.

Howls of pain rent the air as the dogs struggled to their feet and strained at the traces. With bent heads and lolling tongues they moved slowly forward. It was Pedro who bore the main brunt of the storm, as he nosed his way onward. At length the wheel-dog lagged, surged back and dropped in his tracks. He refused to move, buried his nose in the snow and seemed to pay no heed to the whining lash. There was no time for delay, so he was unhitched, thrust rudely aside, and replaced by the dog ahead. Then on again they pressed, the snow becoming deeper, and the wind fiercer. Several times Marion begged to be allowed to walk. But North only laughed, reminding her that she had no snow-shoes.

Even Pedro at length stopped, squatted in the snow, and turned appealing eyes upon his master's face.

"Played out, old boy?" North queried. "You've certainly done well." He then turned to the constable. "Take my place, Rolfe, I'm going to help the dogs."

From the front of the sled he procured a rope, both ends of which he attached to Pedro's harness. With the loop thus formed placed over his shoulders he went ahead, broke down the trail, making it easier for the team to follow. In this manner they were able to make better progress, and they were just in sight of thick woods beyond when the huskies dropped and refused to go a step farther. They, too, were cast adrift, and the sergeant and Pedro, assisted now by the constable, tried to draw the sled. They went but a short distance when they were forced to give up in despair.

"It's no use," North panted, "we can't make it. I guess you'll have to walk, after all, Marion, unless you

have wings. Rolfe, you go ahead and beat down the trail."

Marion was only too glad to be on her feet. She was cold and uncomfortable from her cramped position. The sergeant looked at her in admiration as she smilingly threw aside the robes and stepped upon the trail. The parka she was wearing could not conceal her sparkling eyes, animated face, and several tresses of dark-brown hair waving over cheeks and forehead. How he longed to pick her up in his arms and carry her to the house. He knew that he could do it, for she seemed so fragile as she stood there buffeted by the storm. Marion noticed his look, and surmised its meaning.

"I am quite able to walk," she said. "You have no idea how strong I am."

"I know you are, and, in a way, I am sorry. I would really like to carry you. I dare you to let me."

"Nonsense," Marion chided. "I am going to show you what I can do."

"Very well, then," the sergeant sighed, "follow on my heels, as Shakespeare says, and we shall soon reach the woods."

The trail thus beaten down by two pairs of snowshoes was not hard to follow, and in a short time the heavy timber was reached. Here the wind could not touch them, and they both breathed more freely as they stopped to rest.

"The patrol-house is only a few rods ahead," North explained, "so we should be able to make it now without much trouble. Are you tired?"

"Not much," was the reply. "You won't have to carry me, after all, will you?"

"I am afraid not. But, hello! here's Rolfe back again."

"I beat the way almost to the house," the constable explained, "so I'm going after the dogs. I expect to have trouble."

"Do the best you can," North replied, "and I shall hurry back to help you."

It did not take the sergeant and Marion long to come in sight of the patrol-house. It was a small building, situated a few yards from the trail. As they approached, they could see smoke issuing from the stove pipe stuck up through the roof.

"Somebody's ahead of us, I see," North remarked. "The place will be warm at any rate."

In another minute they were at the door, which the sergeant at once unlatched and pushed open. They were accosted by the growl of a dog, but Marion paid little attention to the animal, for her eyes were fixed at once upon the man standing in the middle of the room. She knew him at once, and her heart almost stopped its beating. The sergeant, however, stepped forward as one who had a right to the place. If he recognized Hugo, the trapper, he gave no sign.

"Bad storm," he remarked. "I'm glad you've got a good fire. I hope you won't mind visitors."

"Make yourself at home," Hugo replied, mistaking him for a miner or a prospector. "All are welcome here."

The sergeant then turned to Marion and noted how she was staring at the trapper.

"You stay here," he said, "while I go and give a hand with the dogs. I won't be any longer than I can help."

Turning, he passed out into the storm, and Marion

was left alone with her father. He was watching her somewhat curiously, his cap pulled well down over his ears. The light from the little window in the south side of the building made it possible for her to see him quite plainly. What should she say? Did he have any idea who she was? Should she warn him of his danger? Would that be fair to North? And yet he was her father, even though he had deserted her and her mother for so long.

And while she thus stood in doubt there came into her mind his loving care when she was but a child. How he had played with her, fondled her, and she had always looked forward to his coming home at night. It all rushed upon her now in a moment. Forgotten was everything else. What would her mother say if she did not stand by him in his time of need?

And all the while Hugo was watching her. What was there in her face that caused that peculiar expression to appear in his eyes? Why did he at length step quickly forward and lay his right hand upon her arm.

"Take off your hood," he ordered in a voice filled with emotion.

As Marion at once obeyed, he looked upon her tossed hair, and again studied her face most intently. He seemed like a man trying to recall something which he had long since forgotten. Marion noted this and her heart beat wildly. The pathetic expression upon his face moved her deeply. She could endure the strain no longer. Hugo had turned away, and was about to go over to the little stove.

"Father! Father!" she cried, "don't you know me? I am Marion, your own daughter."

With a roar the trapper wheeled and again faced the girl. The doubt was now gone from his face, and in

its stead there was an expression of bewildered joy.

"You my daughter?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.
"You Marion Brisbane?"

"Yes, I am," was the faint response. "Didn't you know me?"

Hugo's only reply was to reach out and gather her in his great arms. The tension of long years was broken. The man of iron, the terror of interferers, and the enigma of the trails was at last subdued. His head rested upon his daughter's shoulder, while great sobs shook his mighty frame. At length he stepped back and held her at arm's length.

"Yes, I can see your mother's looks," he mused as if to himself. "I thought I couldn't be mistaken. Tell me, is she alive?"

"No, she has been dead for some time."

"Ah!" Hugo's hands dropped, and he stood staring off into space. The past was sweeping upon him like a flood, and overwhelming him. He turned and sat down heavily upon a rough block of wood which served as a seat. With back bowed and head bent he remained very still. Marion went to his side and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"But you have me, father," she began. "I have been searching for you a long time."

"You have!" Hugo looked at her in surprise. "How did you know me?"

"By your white lock."

"When did you see that?"

"At the hospital when you were asleep on the kitchen floor."

"But my cap was on."

"I know it was. But I crept in and lifted it."

"So you followed me here?"

"Oh, no. I had no idea where you had gone. I am on my way to Big Chance to attend an injured miner. The storm caused us to take refuge here."

"Who is travelling with you?"

"Sergeant North, and——"

Before Marion could finish, Hugo was on his feet. The old expression of hate and fear had returned to his eyes, and in an instant he was completely transformed. With a bound he was across the room. In another instant he had seized his snow-shoes, rifle, and a bundle lying upon the floor. Then with a swift glance toward his daughter, he rushed to the door, tore it open, called to his dog, and plunged out into the storm.

All this happened so quickly that Marion was amazed and dumbfounded. But when her father had left she hurried to the door and looked out. But no sign of him could she see. He had vanished in the forest and the storm. A terrible dread now swept upon her. Only one meaning could she take from her father's peculiar action. He must be fleeing from the Police! But why unless he had committed some crime? She thought of the murder near the C. D. Cut-Off. Did her father commit that?

Forgotten was the storm as she stood in the doorway, staring out among the trees. She thought nothing of the cold, neither did she notice the sergeant until he was but a few yards away.

"Marion! Marion! what is the matter?" he asked in astonishment, noticing the strained look upon her face. "Has anything happened?"

Marion gave a nervous laugh as she stepped back into the room, closely followed by the sergeant.

"I am lonely, that's all," she evaded. "The man you left with me has gone."

"H'm that's good," North replied. "He didn't like a woman around, I suppose. One comes across queer characters up here. Some of them have lived so long alone that they hardly know how to behave in the presence of a female. But, there, we need not worry about that fellow. If he doesn't like your company, there's someone else who does." Stooping, he kissed her upon the lips. "There, little girl, you know who likes your company, so you needn't be lonely any more."

Just then Rolfe was heard outside shouting to the dogs. Marion started and drew back, her face flushed a deep crimson.

"Does he know?" she whispered.

"Who? Rolfe?"

"Yes."

"Sure. Do you think I could keep the good news from him?"

CHAPTER 6

Zell

IN a rude log shack in the little mining camp of Big Chance a young man lay on a rough bunk. By his side sat Marion Brisbane. She had done all in her power on his behalf, but she was fully aware that greater skill than she possessed was needed. Only a doctor could probe for the bullet which was lodged in his side. She felt her own helplessness as she sat there with the still form so near.

Marion had several things to worry her this night. She thought of the journey from the patrol-house to the mining camp. She knew that Sergeant North loved her with all the intensity of his strong nature. And she loved him. But was she true to him? She had not told him that the man who had fled from the patrol-house out into the storm was Hugo, the trapper, and her father. He would find it out some day, and what would he then think of her? Should she have told him? she asked herself over and over again. But it was too late now. He had been gone from Big Chance for over an hour, and who could tell what might happen ere his return? Perhaps he would never come back. He had gone in search of a man who would not lightly be captured. And in the struggle which she felt sure would ensue what terrible things might happen. Her father would fight to the last, she was certain, and so would John North. He had never

been known to turn from the face of man, so she had heard, and so far he had never come back from a quest empty-handed.

And while she sat and meditated, the door was pushed gently open and a girl entered. She came at once over to the bunk, stooped and looked earnestly upon the unconscious man. She then dropped upon her knees by his side, took his left hand in hers and pressed it to her lips. Not a word did she utter, and seemed to pay no heed to the nurse. But Marion did not need any explanation. She understood the meaning of the girl's action, and her heart went out to her in sympathy. She believed that the two were lovers, and that because of their love a tragedy had been enacted there in that little mining camp. The girl impressed her by her remarkable beauty and strange abandon. Her clothes were of the roughest, but so graceful was her form, that they fitted her perfectly. Her hair, black as a raven's wing, fell in two long braids to her waist. The color of her face betrayed Indian blood in her veins, causing Marion to surmise that she was a half-breed. She had met several before, but none as graceful and charming as the one before her. She longed to know her history, and the story of her love for the white man upon the bunk.

At length the girl raised her head and looked up at the nurse.

"Will he get better?" she asked in a voice with a pronounced English accent.

"Let us hope so," Marion replied. "But he needs a doctor at once. He is the only one who can do anything for him now."

"When will he be here?"

"I cannot tell. But I left word for him to come as

soon as possible. He was away from Kynox when I left."

"And you can do nothing for him?" the girl asked.

"Nothing, I am sorry to say."

"Then he must have the missionary. He will come, I know."

"The missionary? Where is he?"

"At 'The Gap.' I shall go for him. He will come for me. He is a good doctor, and he will pray and make him well."

The girl rose to her feet as if to hurry away. But Marion caught her by the arm and told her to sit down.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Zell."

"What else? What is your father's name?"

"Sam Rixton, but people always call him 'Sam, the Siwash.' My mother is an Indian. Her name is Susie."

"And have you lived here all your life?"

"Oh, no. I was put in the Mission school at The Gap when very young, and left only a year ago."

"So that is where you learned to speak English so well, I suppose."

"Yes, the missionary and his wife were good to me. I guess they thought more of me than of all the others. They wanted to keep me and take me back to England. They came from there, you see."

"But you preferred to stay here?"

"I wanted to go until I met Tim," was the low reply. "After that nothing could drag me away from the North. Oh, we were so happy until that trouble came." The girl gave a deep sigh as she looked longingly upon the face of the man before her.

"Where did you first meet him?" Marion asked.

"At The Gap. I was at school then and met Tim when he was prospecting in the hills. He used to come to church every Sunday, and I saw him as we all marched in and out. Then for a time we managed to get letters to each other, and one night after all had gone to bed I slipped out of the house and met Tim by a big tree. He told me how much he loved me, and asked me to leave school and go back to my father and mother so he could see me often."

The girl paused and a troubled expression overspread her face. Then with tear-dimmed eyes she turned impulsively to the nurse.

"That was the beginning of all my trouble," she confessed. "I was found out and ordered not to meet Tim again. The missionary and his wife talked to me. They did not scold me, but said if I would not obey I would have to leave the school. I promised that I would be good. But, oh, Miss, as the weeks went by I did so long to see Tim just once again. I couldn't live without him. I met him again by the tree, and—and," her voice was very low now, "I was sent from the school in disgrace, and came to my parents."

"Have you seen the missionary and his wife since?" Marion asked.

"No. Mrs. Norris died not long after I left. I did want to go to her funeral, but it was a long way, and I was afraid to meet the missionary. I believe she died because I left, for she thought so much of me. I couldn't bear the thought of the missionary seeing me. I knew he wouldn't scold, for he never did that, but he would look at me with those wonderful eyes of his, and, oh, Miss, if you could see them you would know just what I mean."

"Is the missionary still living at The Gap?"

"Yes, he is there, but he has no school now. Nearly all of the Indians have deserted him. Bad white men did it. They took in rum, made fun of the missionary and his school, and got the Indians to leave the place. They are all scattered now, some here, and some in other camps, always hanging around for rum. They will do anything for hootch, and the women are just as bad as the men."

"Why does the missionary stay at The Gap when the Indians have gone?" Marion enquired.

"He is waiting for them to come back, so I have been told. He prays and prays for them. He has service in the church every night, and most of the time he is the only one there. But he rings the little bell just as he used to do, and then goes on with the service."

"He must be a good man," Marion remarked.

"Oh, he is very good. But he is getting old and feeble now, so maybe he won't be there much longer. But if he were only here I am sure he would help Tim. His prayers, I guess, would do more for him than anything else."

"You haven't forgotten what you learned at the school, I see. You still believe in prayers, even though you have gone astray."

"I haven't gone astray in the way you mean," the girl declared as she gave her head a slight toss. "I was sent from the school, I know, but I have done nothing really wrong. I always remember what I was taught, and say my prayers night and morning. Tim is a good man and he always told me to do what was right."

"But he was willing for you to disobey orders, and get dismissed from the school," Marion reminded.

"Oh, that was different, Miss. You see, we loved

each other so much that we couldn't bear to be kept apart. Nothing must stand in the way of love, so Tim said."

Marion was tempted to smile at the simplicity and candor of the girl. To her, whatever Tim said was right. She longed to know more about the young man who had won the heart of this beautiful half-breed.

"Were you and Tim planning to get married soon?" she asked.

"Oh, yes. He said he was going to take me outside next summer, and we would then be married. But now this trouble has come, and Tim may die."

"How did it happen, Zell? You don't mind telling me, do you?"

"I don't mind, Miss. But I am afraid all the time. Bill did that to Tim, and he might do worse to me. He is a bad, bad man."

"Who is Bill?"

"The man who shot Tim. He hates him because he wants me. Oh, I am afraid of him! He follows me around. He is called 'Bill, the Slugger' because he hits so hard."

"So he wants to marry you, does he?" Marion queried, for the first time beginning to understand a little of the situation.

"Yes, he does. But I hate him, and have told him so over and over again. I slapped him in the face once, and he swore awful, called me a 'she-devil,' and said that he would pay me back. And that is the way he has done it." She motioned to the man on the bunk. "I am afraid to go home, for I know Bill will be waiting for me."

"But how did he come to shoot Tim?" Marion asked. "Was it for revenge?"

The girl looked anxiously toward the door and then at the nurse.

"Bend your head so I can whisper in your ear," she ordered. "There, that's better. I don't want anybody to hear. Bill might be listening at the door. It was partly for revenge and partly for fear that he shot Tim."

"Fear of what?"

"He was afraid that Tim knew too much, so he wanted to get him out of the way. Bill picked a quarrel with him, so Tim got mad and hit him. Oh, I found out all about it."

"But what was it about which Tim knew too much?" Marion questioned.

"Can't you guess?" the girl asked. "I don't like to tell you because I am afraid even to speak of it."

"I have no idea what it can be," Marion replied. "You see, I know very little about what goes on here."

"But it wasn't here, Miss, that it happened. It was far away, near the C. D. Cut-Off."

"Oh!" It was all that Marion said, for a new light was beginning to dawn upon her mind. The C. D. Cut-Off! It was near there that the terrible murder had been committed, of which her father was suspected. Was it possible that this girl knew something about that affair? It did seem likely, and the thought filled her with a new hope. "Was it Bill who did that?" she asked in a very low voice.

Zell started, and again glanced toward the door.

"I didn't say that, Miss," she whispered in reply. "I don't dare to. He would kill me if I did."

"You needn't be afraid," Marion soothed. "The Police will not let any one harm you. Sergeant North must know about this."

At these words the girl sprang to her feet, her eyes dilated with fear. She was trembling violently, and unconsciously she stooped and caught the nurse's hands in hers.

"Don't, don't tell him!" she begged. "Bill will know who told, and he will kill me. I'm not afraid to die, but I want to live a while longer to help Tim. I must go for the missionary. I shall go just as soon as Bill leaves Big Chance."

"Where is Bill going?" Marion asked.

"I don't know for sure, but I think he is planning to go outside. Just after the Police left, he began to get ready for a trip. He was packing up when I came here. He has been almost frightened out of his wits ever since the Police came."

"How do you know all this, Zell?"

"Oh, I have ways of finding out. I have kept my eyes on Bill ever since he shot Tim. He didn't know I was watching him.

"So you think he is going to leave this country?"

"I am sure of it."

"How will he go?"

"By way of The Gap and across the mountains."

"But the Police have gone in that direction," Marion reminded. "Why should he go where they are?"

"Bill has a reason," was the low reply.

"What reason?"

"Can't you guess? A bad man will stop at nothing."

"But the Police can stop him."

"Can they? You don't know Bill, I guess. He's a devil."

"But he is afraid of the Police, so you say."

"That is so. He is so afraid that he hates them. The missionary used to tell us what the Bible said

about the devil going around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; that he hates good people, and tries to harm them. So that is the way with Bill. He has tried over and over again to harm me, but I was too sharp for him. Look what he did to Tim. And he will try to hurt the Police."

"What! Sergeant North?" Marion had a new interest now in Bill, the Slugger. "Will he dare to do anything to a member of the Force?"

Zell was quick to detect the note of anxiety in Marion's voice, and at once she suspected something. It drew her closer to the beautiful white woman.

"Do you love Sergeant North?" she frankly asked.

Marion started and flushed at the unexpected question. But so sincere was the girl, that she decided to throw aside all reserve and pretense.

"Yes, I love him," she candidly acknowledged.

"Ah, that's good. And does he love you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, Miss, you can understand how I feel about Tim. You wouldn't want that to happen to the one you love, would you?"

"No! No!" Marion fervently declared. "It would be terrible!"

"It would, so you and I must see that it doesn't happen."

"How can we do that?"

"Go with me to The Gap and warn the Sergeant. If we cannot overtake him, we can go to the Police house which is not far from the school. The Sergeant will be sure to stop there."

"But what about Tim?" Marion asked. "We can't leave him here alone until the doctor comes."

"My mother will stay, Miss. She is a good woman,

and can do more than I can. My father has a fine team of dogs which I know he will let me have. He will do anything for me when he knows that I am doing what is right. He likes Tim, and he will be glad to have the missionary come and pray for him. Will you go?"

"When?"

"To-night, before Bill starts. We must get ahead of him."

For a few minutes Marion sat lost in deep thought. At length she arose, and seized the girl's hands in hers.

"Yes, I shall go," she firmly said. "I trust you, Zell, to lead the way, and may God help us both."

CHAPTER 7

Terrors of the Night

IT was upon the impulse of the moment that Marion had agreed to go to The Gap with the half-breed girl. Half an hour later she almost repented of her hasty decision. She knew very little about Zell, and she wondered whether she could trust to her guidance. This feeling of doubt, however, vanished as they pulled out from Big Chance on the first lap of their long run. It was near midnight, and the full moon was just rounding the massive northeast shoulder of the Golden Horn. The little mining camp was shrouded in deep shadow. Silence reigned in each log cabin, and not a living creature was to be seen. Zell's father, Siwash Sam, had made speedy preparations for the trip, and had given his daughter implicit directions, telling her which trail to follow to shorten the journey by several miles; to be on the lookout for storms on the mountain; and to be careful when rounding the rocky spur of the high ridge leading to The Gap.

"Do you think that Zell can manage, all right?" Marion asked as she took her place upon the little toboggan.

"Sure," Sam replied. "Zell kin handle them dogs better than anyone else. She's a holy terror when she hits the trail. Ye needn't have any fear about her, Miss. Mebbe you'll be as good as she is before ye git back."

It did not take Marion long to find how true were the man's words. No sooner were they beyond the limits of Big Chance than Zell's entire nature seemed to change. No longer was she the quiet, timid girl she had known in the cabin watching by Tim's side. Instead, she was transformed into a strong, confident guide, resourceful, alert, and full of abounding energy. The spirit of the wild seemed to possess her. She raced behind the toboggan, urging on the dogs, her whip cracking at times like pistol shots.

For miles the trail led through a sparsely wooded region where the trees cast long sombre shadows upon the light snow. The dogs settled into a steady jog where the ground was level, but raced like the wind down every hill. Then Zell would jump upon the tail of the toboggan and whoop aloud with glee to the speeding animals. They seemed to imbibe much of the enthusiasm of their young mistress, and upon reaching the valley below they would glance quickly around as if for a word of approval, which was never lacking. They were four noble brutes, huskies, of the Mackenzie River breed, accustomed to great hardships, and possessed of marvellous endurance. Savage they were to all except their owners. To Zell they were harmless. They obeyed her slightest wish, and she could handle them even when her father and mother failed. A word or a lifted hand from her had more effect than a shower of blows.

Marion had plenty of time to think as she sat upon the toboggan, comfortably wrapped in a big wolf-skin robe. She was glad now that she had undertaken the journey. There was much at stake, she was well aware, and she often wondered how it would all end. What she should do upon reaching The Gap, she had no idea.

But somewhere beyond was her father, fleeing from place to place, with that expression of a hunted creature in his grey eyes. She had seen it for a few seconds as he bounded from the cabin that night into the heart of the storm. She had thought about it much since, and it had puzzled her. And following her father was John North, the man who had avowed his love for her. Would they meet somewhere in that desolate wilderness? What would be the outcome? And then there was Bill, the Slugger. Had he already started forth upon his diabolical quest? Perhaps he would creep upon the sergeant and the constable asleep around their camp-fire at night. The thought was terrible. Such a thing had taken place before, she well knew, and it might happen again. In vain she racked her brain in an effort to devise some plan to avert a tragedy, and perhaps two.

For several hours they continued on their way, and at last when the summit of an extra heavy hill had been reached, Zell called a halt. The dogs were glad to stop, so flopping down upon the trail they began to clear particles of snow and ice from their feet with their teeth. Nearby was a clump of fir trees, several of which were dead and afforded excellent fuel. It did not take Zell long to prepare a fire, over which she placed a kettle filled with snow. While this latter was melting, she unpacked her supply of provisions and laid them out near the fire. Marion, standing watching, was pleased at the girl's deftness and neatness. She knew exactly what to do, and when the meal was ready, she served the simple repast with an admirable grace.

"I suppose you were taught to cook at the mission school," Marion remarked, helping herself to a piece of

moose steak which Zell had just fried. "You certainly learned your lessons well."

The girl smiled, while an expression of pleasure shone in her eyes.

"Mrs. Norris always taught us," she explained. "We took turns cooking at the school. I won several prizes for baking bread, and making cake. Tim was very fond of my cooking."

"You were able to teach your mother many things, I suppose, when you went back home?"

"Not much. My mother, you see, was from the Coast, and the women there are good cooks. She was a Chilcat Indian, and her mother taught her. I have heard my father say that he married her because she was such a good cook. I guess, though, he was just in fun."

"Does the missionary at The Gap do his own cooking now?" Marion asked.

"I suppose he does, Miss. But I don't believe he eats much, anyway. He didn't when we were at the school, as he was always thinking and writing so much. And now that he is alone maybe he eats less, for he must be working a great deal."

"What does he write about?"

"He makes books for the Indians. He writes hymns, prayers, and the Bible in their own language. He has taught many of them to read."

"Do the Indians use the books?"

"Oh, yes. They carry them with them to their hunting-grounds, and sing the hymns around their camp-fires at night."

"But you told me that the Indians have left the mission."

"In a way they have, but they like to read the Bible

and sing the hymns when out in the hills. I was with my father and mother last winter when we came to a band of Indians a long way off. That night they sang, men, women, and children. It was great to hear them."

"Does the missionary know of this?"

"I believe he does, and it makes him hope that they have not forgotten what he has taught them, and that some day they will go back to The Gap."

For a while they thus sat and talked, Marion asking many questions, to which the girl readily replied. They were about to resume their journey when Zell gave a slight start, and looked anxiously back over the trail. She listened intently, her body tense and alert.

"What is it?" Marion somewhat anxiously asked.

"I thought I heard a noise, Miss. It sounded like the crack of a driver's whip or a rifle shot. But I guess I was mistaken. One can hear a long way up here in the hills when the air is so clear."

"Perhaps there is someone on the trail behind us," Marion suggested. "Indians travel this way, do they not?"

"Yes, this is one of their favorite trails. But there are no Indians coming from Big Chance to-day."

Nothing more was said about the matter as they continued on their way. But Marion noticed that Zell was more quiet, and indulged in no loud cracking of the whip. Whenever they had reached the top of a hill or had crossed an inland lake, or a stretch of wild meadow, she noticed that the girl would stop, and look keenly back over the way they had just come. This happened so often that she became uneasy. The intense silence of the land was affecting her, causing her to become nervous. A feeling of impending calamity stole into her soul, which try as she might she could not

banish. It was with her all through the short winter day. She tried to throw it off by running with Zell behind the sled. This helped some, but the feeling still remained.

It was a bright day, and the dogs made excellent progress. They loped forward, anxious for camping time when they would receive their food. Marion was fascinated with the scenery of the country. Off in the distance rose great snow-enshrouded mountains, aglow with the light of the sun. Above, towered the dazzling peak of the Golden Horn, which seemed so near, yet she knew it was leagues away. At times the trail led along the side of the mountain where they could look down upon the pointed tops of the trees in the valley below, resembling countless spears poised heavenward.

Only once did they halt to rest, eat a frugal meal, and then on and up again. Marion was becoming weary, although Zell seemed as fresh as ever. Slowly the sun sank westward, and at length disappeared below a far-off peak. Ere long darkness stole over the land, and night approached with rapid strides. Soon it would be camping time, and Zell was watching for a good place to pass the night when a sound fell upon their ears, which caused Marion to give a gasp of fright, and turn impulsively to her companion.

"What is that?" she asked, her body trembling.

"A wolf," was the quiet reply. "We must make camp at once, and build a big fire. Ah, here is a good place with plenty of wood."

In a few minutes the dogs were unharnessed, the fire built, and the blazing flames leaping high into the air.

From time to time came that long-drawn, blood-curdling howl, the cry of the leader to the pack. It seemed

nearer now, and Marion shuddered with apprehension. Even Zell's face expressed her concern. From a pocket in her dress she brought forth a revolver, and examined it carefully. Marion had no idea that the girl carried such a weapon, and it surprised her.

"Do you often have use for that?" she asked.

"It is handy sometimes," was the reply. "One never knows what might happen. There are two-legged wolves in this country, and I fear them more than I do the four-legged ones. A girl has to protect herself, you know."

Marion was beginning to realize something of the undercurrent of life in the North. Hitherto, she had known only the surface. There were deeps which she had not sounded, but of which her companion seemed fully aware. She said nothing, however, but assisted in building the little lean-to which would be their abode for the night. When this had been erected, fir boughs laid down, and the blankets and the wolf-skin robe laid out, she was glad to rest. No longer did the howl of the wolves sound upon their ears. The fire was bright, and the snug abode comfortable.

After they had eaten their supper and the dogs were fed, they wrapped themselves up for the night. Both were tired, so it was not long before they were sound asleep. The dogs curled themselves up near the fire and enjoyed the genial heat. Silence reigned, save for the crackling of the burning sticks, or the occasional snapping of a frost-stung tree. The night was cold, although not a breath of wind stirred the trees. The great vault of heaven was thickly studded with stars, for the moon had not risen to pale their glory. The Northern Lights sent out their wavering streamers as

they marched and countermarched in silent, mysterious battalions.

And while the tired ones slept, gaunt, hairy forms, with fiery lolling tongues, and blazing eyes, loped along the upper ridge, and approached the camp. The wolves were hungry, for food was scarce. Only in an extreme emergency did these somewhat cowardly creatures venture near human abodes. It was the dogs which attracted them now. They were in desperate straits, as no deer, moose, or any living thing had crossed their path for days. Only when starving would they unite, for strength and safety lay in numbers. There were but twelve of them thus banded together, but mad with hunger, they were a pack to be dreaded.

The dogs scented them, and their savage growls and whines of fear aroused the sleeping women. Zell was first awake, and in an instant realized what was the matter. The fire was burning low, so seizing several dry sticks she threw them upon the hot coals. In another minute Marion was on her feet, looking fearfully to the right among the trees where the wolves were gathered. As the fire increased in strength, and the bright flames illumined the camping grounds for several rods around, she was enabled to detect dim, slinking forms not far away.

"Will they attack us?" she asked, laying a nervous hand upon Zell's arm.

"Not likely now," was the reply. "They are after the dogs, but this fire will keep them back. Look at that big, bold brute there," and she pointed to a large wolf which had ventured threateningly near. "I'm going to try a shot at him."

Drawing forth her revolver, she took a quick steady aim, and fired. A yell of pain split the night, as the

brute leaped into the air, and vanished into the darkness.

"I hit him," Zell exulted, while a smile wreathed her face. "I wish I had my rifle, then I could easily settle the whole pack."

"Do you suppose you killed him?" Marion asked.

"Oh, no, he was too far away. If I had killed him, the rest of the wolves would be eating him up by now. I must not waste any more cartridges upon them at that distance, as I shall need them if they come too close."

For some time, which seemed to Marion very long, they watched and waited for the next move on the part of the lurking brutes. The dogs huddled together close to the little lean-to, either whining with fear, or growling with anger. Their implacable enemies were just beyond that fire-lit circle, and they knew only too well the object of their visit. The dogs were ever ready and willing to fight with one another, for there was always a chance to win. But against those gaunt, savage, and famine-stricken fiends of the wilderness they would be helpless. Whenever the wolves approached nearer, they shrank closer to the women for protection. Bolder now became the enemy, and although Zell fired two more shots into their midst, it only deterred them for a few minutes. They circled the encampment several times, always drawing nearer, especially back of the lean-to. The situation was becoming critical, for at any minute they might hurl themselves upon the helpless ones crouching near the fire. Zell kept her revolver in readiness, although she was well aware how little she could do should a rush ensue.

CHAPTER 8

Hugo to the Rescue

HUGO, the trapper, was late, and he was speeding along with great swinging strides. He was alone, for he had left his dog fastened in his little cabin up on the mountain side. He had a reason for this, as his mission that day had been of extreme importance, and complete silence had to be maintained. He was in no enviable frame of mind as he strode through the night, and any enemy, whether man or beast, attempting to interfere with him would have found in him a desperate opponent. He had been watching another trail that day and what he had seen filled his heart with a burning rage, mingled with a nameless fear. He felt as he did that night when he had bounded from the cabin into the storm. Notwithstanding his strength and astuteness, he always shrank from the Police, considering them his bitterest enemies. So that day as he had watched forms speeding along behind their dogs, he knew who they were, and surmised the mission upon which they were bent.

He had swung up from the valley and was about to cross the trail, known as the "Cut-Off," between Big Chance and The Gap, when a shot arrested his attention, causing him to stop abruptly. The report came from the left, and keenly he peered in that direction. Seeing and hearing nothing more, he moved cautiously forward. Not a sound did he make as he glided among

the trees, keeping a short distance from the trail above. Ere long he again stopped, for a glimmer of light fell upon his eyes. Then he heard the snarling of dogs, and at once realised that trouble of some kind was just ahead. Slowly advancing, the light became brighter, and a few more steps showed him the women crouching near the lean-to with the dogs huddled at their feet. In an instant he grasped the meaning of the situation. His rifle, already in his hands, he gripped more firmly, and waited. He could not see the wolves but he knew that they were there. When, however, Zell fired the second and the third shots, he caught a glimpse of the brutes as they fell back with yelps and angry snarls.

Who the women were Hugo could not tell, not being able to see their faces, which were partly hidden by the lean-to. He surmised, however, that they were Indians, and he wondered what had become of the men. Noticing that the wolves were becoming bolder, and evidently preparing for an attack, he moved a little nearer, stepping somewhat to the right for a better sight. As he did so he gave a start, for at once Marion's face was exposed to view. In an instant he recognized her, and the form of his countenance changed. The defiant light faded from his eyes and was replaced by an expression of deep concern. For a few seconds he stood there as still as the trees around him. What he saw stirred his inmost depths, and brought back memories of other days. She was his own child, yet he must not go to her. All he could do was to protect her from those brutes of the forest.

He was aroused by a cry of fear. Glancing to the right he saw a great wolf advancing within the ring of light, flanked to the right and left by the rest of the pack. Zell fired another shot, but missed. The leader

drew back with a savage snarl, and was about to spring forward when Hugo brought his rifle to his shoulder and fired. With a wild yell the wolf leaped into the air, and dropped upon the ground. Taken aback, his followers hesitated and one by one they fell before the unerring shots of the unseen marksman. Not until five had fallen did the rest retreat, and then slowly and wrathfully they drew away among the darkness of the forest. But Hugo's blood was now up and he feared the wolves as if they were so many kittens. He stepped quickly toward them, refilling the magazine of his rifle as he did so. He could see their slinking forms now, and again into their midst he poured messages of death. Yells of pain and baffled rage followed each shot. The few remaining wolves faced the trapper, but ere they could spring, they, too, were rolling in the snow. It was a veritable carnage of death from which only one brute escaped by leaping aside and dashing off pell-mell among the trees.

When the fight was over, a grim smile overspread Hugo's face. Then he turned toward the surprised and staring women.

He was upon the point of stepping forward and calming their fears by telling them that the danger was past. He changed his mind, however, drew back a few paces among the trees, and stood with his eyes fixed intently upon Marion's face. A great longing was tugging at his heart such as he had not known for years. He recalled the days he had played with her in his old happy home. She had changed since then, but she was his child. How often he had thought of her during his wanderings and long lonely night vigils. In fact, she had been seldom out of his mind. His affection for her had saved him from developing into a

brute, causing him to perform numerous deeds of humanity, the surprise of many people. So standing there, hidden by the trees and the night, he feasted his eyes upon her face. After a while he turned away, reached the trail, and sped rapidly along in the direction of The Gap. At length he turned aside, plunged through a heavy thicket of firs and jack-pines, crossed a narrow strip of wild meadow, and climbed a steep hill until he came to a small cabin tucked away amidst the trees. He opened the door and entered. He then lighted a couple of candles, and built a fire in the little sheet-iron camping stove. The dog was most profuse in its welcome, leaping upon him, and giving expression to yelps of delight. Hugo fondled the animal, his eyes beaming with pleasure.

"Good old Pedro," he said. "You missed me, eh? And I missed you. But strange things are afoot these days, old boy, so we must be careful."

When supper was over and the dog fed, Hugo lighted his pipe, stretched himself upon the bunk near the fire, and gave himself up to anxious thought. He reviewed the events of the day, especially his recent encounter with the wolves. What were the women doing there? he asked himself over and over again. And where were they going? What could bring Marion so far into the wilderness? It must be of more than ordinary importance, for he had never known a white woman to venture such a distance from Kynox, especially in the dead of winter. The more he thought about it, the more disturbed he became. Had it been any other woman it would not have mattered so much to him. But she was his own daughter, and his heart was deeply stirred.

For over an hour Hugo lay there wrapt in thought.

He then rose to his feet and paced up and down the small room. Several times he went to the door and looked out in the direction where the women were camped. An uneasy feeling was tugging at his heart which he could not banish. He called himself a fool, blew out the candles, and threw himself down again upon the bunk. But he could not sleep. His thoughts were ever down the trail as he pictured those two women alone in the night. Perhaps more wolves had returned, for he knew that several packs were on the move of late. And if not wolves, there were creatures more to be feared where helpless women were concerned. It was most unlikely that men would be prowling around, he reasoned. But who could tell? The absence of those women must surely be known at Big Chance, and there were men there capable of any deed of villainy.

At length he sprang to his feet, pulled on his heavy outer jacket and cap, seized his snow-shoes, and ordering the dog to stay behind, he left the cabin, and hurried down the trail. It took him but a few minutes to come near the camping ground, where he moved most cautiously, peering keenly ahead. Although he approached most silently, the dogs scented his presence. They leaped to their feet and growled ferociously. Hugo paid little heed to the brutes, his attention being centred upon a lone figure huddled before the fire. Instinctively he realised that something was the matter, so stepping into the circle of light he rapidly approached. Marion saw him coming, recognized him at once, and with a cry of joy sprang to her feet. So overcome was she that she tottered and would have fallen had not Hugo leaped forward and caught her in his arms. Just for a few luxurious seconds he held her close, and

then laid her tenderly upon the wolf-skin robe. Marion was deadly pale, and she was trembling violently. The strain of the night had unnerved her, and this sudden and unexpected meeting with her father was more than she could endure. As she lay there, she kept her eyes fixed upon his face. Then her lips moved as if she would speak. This Hugo noted, and he bent toward her.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Why are you alone? Where is that girl? You seem almost frightened to death."

"And so I am," was the low reply. "Oh, this has been a terrible night! We were attacked by wolves, and when they were about to spring upon us, somebody shot them, and saved us."

"I know all about that," and Hugo nodded his head. "I happened along just at the right moment."

"Was it really you?" Marion asked in surprise, drawing herself up with an effort to a sitting position. "And have you seen Zell? Do you know where she is?"

"The girl who was with you?" Hugo asked. "Where did she go?"

"She went just a short distance over there after some dry wood," Marion explained, motioning to the right. "But she hasn't come back, and I am afraid that something has happened to her. Perhaps the wolves caught her."

"Didn't you hear any noise?"

"Not a sound."

"Did you call to her?"

"Oh, yes. I called to her for a long time, but could get no answer."

"Four-legged wolves didn't get her," Hugo emphatically declared, while a fierce expression leaped into

his eyes. "She would have given a cry of distress if they had."

"Why, what could have happened to her, then?"

"That remains to be seen. There are worse creatures than four-legged wolves prowling around at times, especially where attractive women are concerned."

Marion understood the meaning of these words, and her thoughts flashed at once to Bill, the Slugger. Could it be possible that he had been following them, and had seized the half-breed girl and carried her off ere she could give a cry of warning? She recalled what Zell had told her about Bill, and his hatred to Tim. She felt weaker and more helpless than ever as she thought of these things.

"What are we to do?" she asked in a despairing voice. Then in a few words she confessed her fears to her father.

"And it was Bill who shot Tim, you say?" he asked.

"That is what Zell told me. Out of revenge, so I understand."

"Was there any other reason?"

"I believe so."

Hugo remained silent for a few minutes, lost in thought. Marion watched him closely, and tried to see in his face the resemblance she had known and loved years before. She thought of all that he had meant to her and to her mother, and how he had provided for them through the years. And how he must have suffered the long separation from those so dear to him. What mental agony must have been his. And suppose he had done what was wrong, he was her father. A sudden rush of affection swept upon her as she gazed upon that stern, sad face. The deep wrinkles upon his brow told their own silent tale. No matter

what he had done, he had surely paid the price over and over again.

"Father," she cried, impetuously reaching out her arms. "I want you as I used to want you as a child."

For an instant only did Hugo hesitate. He then stooped and allowed Marion to encircle his neck with her arms, and impress a kiss upon his forehead. His great form trembled and his eyes were misty. In another minute he freed himself, stepped back, and stood erect before his daughter.

"You should not do that," he told her.

"Do what?"

"Kiss me. Am I not an outcast? Have I not been hounded from place to place? Are not the Police always watching to seize me?"

"But you are my father," Marion reminded, "and no matter what you have done I can never forget that."

Hugo was about to reply, but words seemed suddenly to fail him. He stood staring off into the blackness of the forest as if he beheld something there.

"Won't you come with me?" Marion asked, wondering at his silence. "We can leave this country, go outside, and you can begin life all over again."

"No, no!" Hugo fiercely replied. Then his manner changed. "You are tired, worn out. Come with me to my little cabin, and when you have rested we will talk about this. I have kept you here too long already."

"But what about Zell?" Marion asked. "She might come back."

"Not likely," was the reply. "Anyway, we can't help her just now."

CHAPTER 9

Stains on the Snow

MARION was glad to leave the lean-to and follow her father. She started aside and gave voice to a slight cry of fear as the toe of her moccasined foot touched the body of a wolf stiffening upon the snow. The forest seemed filled with horrible things, dead and alive. And somewhere in their secret depths was Zell, the beautiful girl to whom she had become so deeply attached. Was she alive? or was she, too, lying upon the cold snow like the wolves around her? But perhaps she was alive, and longing to die. The thought was terrible. Why were base men allowed to roam at large, to prey upon helpless and innocent women and girls? She knew that it was permitted in towns and cities, so could it be otherwise on the ragged edge of civilisation? How she longed for the strength of a man, her father's, for instance, that she might go about redressing human wrongs.

She thought of these things as she struggled bravely along the trail. She had no snow-shoes, and she could have made very little progress without her father's strong supporting arm. She did not wish to give up, but ere long she felt that she could go no farther. A great weakness swept upon her, which forced her to sink down upon the snow with a weary gasp. For a second Hugo hardly knew what to do. Then without a word he stooped, picked her up boldly and bore her

speedily forward. Like a tired child she lay in those strong encircling arms. How often he had carried her when she was a child, and she had often admired his strength then. But now he seemed a veritable giant as he strode among the trees, crossed the wild meadow, and ascended the hill to the cabin.

In a few minutes Marion was lying upon the bunk. How good it was to be there, and how restful. She felt that she could sleep forever. It did not take Hugo long to stir up the few live coals in the stove, boil some water, and prepare a cup of tea. This, together with some ptarmigan broth he also warmed, proved most refreshing. The heat of the room was conducive to sleep, and before long she was in a sound slumber.

An expression of satisfaction shone upon Hugo's face as he watched his sleeping daughter. He filled and lighted his pipe, and sat down upon a block of wood and leaned back against the wall on the opposite side of the stove. He could not see the girl's face, as the one candle which was burning gave but a feeble flickering light. But he kept his eyes fixed in her direction, and his thoughts were deep. He was really happier than he had been for years. His own daughter was with him, the one for whom his heart had been crying out in all his lonely wanderings.

Throughout the rest of the night Hugo kept watch. He prepared and ate his frugal breakfast, and fed the dog. As daylight was stealing over the land, he left the cabin and made his way back to the encampment. The dogs were still there, huddled upon the robes in the lean-to. The wolves were lying just where they had fallen. Hugo glanced at the gaunt brutes as if appraising their worth.

"If I had time," he mused, "I would take you to the

cabin and strip off your pelts. But I've got other matters of more importance now. He then touched the nearest wolf with his foot. "You didn't expect this, I reckon, when you made the attack last night. It was mighty lucky I happened to come along when I did. It's a pity I wasn't on hand when that two-legged devil was around. There may have been more than one, though, but that wouldn't have made any difference. I guess I could have settled the whole bunch. I hope to goodness I'll run across them before long."

The dogs snarled as he approached the lean-to. But he drove them back, and gathered up the robe and blankets. He left them there and began to examine the environs of the camping-place, especially in the direction the half-breed girl had gone after the dry wood. The wolves had beaten down the snow so it was difficult for him to find any clue. Several times he encompassed the place, moving in a wider circle each time until he came to the edge of the untrampled snow. He had almost reached the trail when his attention was arrested by several dry sticks which had evidently been dropped in a hurry.

And right here he saw moccasined footprints, large and small. Close by, the snow was trampled down, as if a struggle had taken place. This spot he examined most carefully, hoping to obtain some clue to aid him in his search for the missing girl. He was about to abandon his search when his right foot upturned a piece of cloth which had been hidden by the snow. Eagerly he seized this and inspected it closely. It was merely a small fragment, and as near as he could make out it had belonged to the flap of a man's cap for the protection of his ears. To Hugo it had a world of meaning. He pictured the half-breed girl struggling

furiously in the arms of her assailant, tearing at the man's face and head, and ripping away a portion of his cap in her desperation. A growl of rage rumbled up in Hugo's throat as he thought of the foul attack upon a helpless girl. Suppose it had been his own daughter! What if Marion were now in the clutches of that inhuman brute, whoever he might be! He turned and looked off toward the right. Placing the piece of cloth carefully in a pocket of his jacket, he walked slowly toward the trail, keeping his eyes fixed intently upon the foot-prints, which here were only a man's size. Reaching the trail, he saw that the steps led in the direction of Big Chance. How far had the villain gone? he asked himself. No doubt he had a team of dogs near, and by now he was far away with his captive. It was most unlikely that he would take the girl back to the little mining camp where her father was living. He knew Siwash Sam, a man who minded his own business, but when once aroused his wrath was terrible. Only a devil or a madman would think of interfering with his only daughter, the pride of his life. But Bill, the Slugger, was both, he was well aware. He was a devil in badness, and his passion for the beautiful half-breed girl had turned his brain. Hugo knew of other deeds of infamy he had committed, and had so cleverly covered up his trail as to escape the far-reaching hands of the Police. But now he should not escape, was the trapper's determination. He himself would be the avenger of the innocent if the Law did not get him first.

The thought of the Law caused Hugo to look quickly around. Then he gave a sarcastic grunt as he hurried along the trail.

"Hugo, you fool," he muttered, "you better look

after your own skin. If you're not careful something may happen to you."

His mind turned to his daughter and an anxious expression overspread his face. What was he to do with her? He longed to have her with him, but under the circumstances that was out of the question. He thought of the missionary at The Gap. If he could get there, perhaps she could live in the mission house for a time, at least. He was sure he could make it worth while for the missionary to look after his daughter. He raised his right hand and pressed it against his breast. Yes, the ring was safe, and it would help him if necessary. He recalled the day he had found it in the crack of the floor in that cabin on the bank of the river. How differently matters had turned out from what he had planned.

Thinking thus as he hurried forward, he ere long came to a heavy clump of trees. He had gone part way through when he came upon the site of an abandoned camping-place. He felt the ashes, and found them cold. He next examined the beaten-down snow and saw where the dogs had been lying. He studied a number of moccasined foot prints, and saw again several small impressions, together with large ones. He was certain now that they were made by the half-breed girl, and that her captor had camped with her here. His eyes suddenly rested upon the peculiar marks upon the packed-down snow a few feet from the fire. Stooping, he saw that it was blood. A chip lying near was also stained with frozen drops. Was it human blood? he asked himself, or was it from the bleeding feet of the dogs? He banished this latter idea, however, after he had looked carefully around where the dogs had been lying. There were no signs of blood

there, so he knew that the stains near the fire were made by the blood of human beings. What had happened? he wondered. Had a tragedy been enacted there in the night? What had become of the campers?

For a while Hugo remained there, searching for some further clue. But nothing could he find to aid him in his search. Silence reigned around him. Far off the peaks of the great mountains were aglow with the morning sun. Above him the Golden Horn was agleam with surpassing glory. The entire landscape seemed fresh and joyous after its bath of night. But Hugo noticed none of these wonders. His thoughts dwelt upon more serious things. He was thinking deeply, and his brow knit with perplexity. There was a certain course he wished to pursue, yet he felt unable to carry it out. A restraining influence overshadowed him, pressing hard upon his very soul. It was no new battle he was fighting, as he had been contending fiercely for long years. It was a struggle between the brute nature within him, and the call to higher things. At times the former had seemed to sway his entire being, and on such occasions he had been a terror to man and beast. But alone in the silence of the great wilderness the nobleness within him had always risen to battle with the demon that would drag him down. And now another element in the person of his daughter had come to strengthen his manhood and his desire for a new mode of life. Would it not be better to leave the trails, he reasoned, face the world boldly, and if punishment according to the legal code were necessary, to bear it without a murmur?

As he thus stood there battling with these conflicting emotions, his keen ears caught a disturbing sound up the trail. He listened intently, his entire body now

fully alert. That it was a dog-team, he soon became certain, and it was rapidly approaching. Forgotten in an instant was Hugo's half-formed resolve to face the world boldly, and begin life anew. The habits of years had taken too firm a grip upon him to be shuffled off at will like a suit of clothes. Like a subtle poison the spirit of determined antagonism had permeated his entire being, affecting his every thought and action.

With an angry growl he sprang from the trail, crashed through the trees, and made his way to the base of the hill not far away. Here he paused and looked back. Not being able to see anything owing to the intervening trees, he ascended the hill until he came to a large rock behind which he crouched. From this place of concealment he could see fairly well all that took place on the trail below. Neither did he have long to wait, for in a few minutes a dog-team hove in sight, and pulled up near the abandoned camping-place. The two men who accompanied the dogs he at once recognized as Sergeant North and Constable Rolfe. He shrank back a little more behind the great rock, fearful lest he should be observed. His respect for the Police was now greater than ever. The day before he had watched them as they sped along the main trail between Big Chance and The Gap. He had smiled grimly then, satisfied that they were on the wrong scent. Now, however, they were right before him, and but for his keenness of hearing and quickness of action they would have been upon him before he could escape. To accomplish that journey they must have travelled all night. But why had they changed their course? That thought filled him with an intense uneasiness. His heart throbbed with hatred as he watched them. How easily he could pick them off. Only two shots would

be necessary, for he knew that he could not miss. He clutched hard his rifle, and the forefinger of his mittenless right hand toyed with the trigger. One firm pressure, then the snick of the breech-bolt, a second reverberating report and all would be over. It was a tempting situation. But Hugo hesitated. He might kill those two men, but what would be gained? There were others to take their place, for back of them was the entire Force, together with the strength of the whole British Empire if necessary. He thought, too, of Marion. Why should he bring more disgrace upon her? If he had only himself to consider it would be different. It did not matter much what happened to himself. He felt that he was of little use in the world, anyway.

Slowly his grasp lessened upon the rifle, and he replaced the mitten upon his uncovered hand. Then fearful lest the Police should notice his tracks and follow him, he moved cautiously from the rock, slipped among the thicket of jack-pines, and sped rapidly away.

CHAPTER 10

Lost

ZELL had stooped and was picking up the dry wood she had gathered that evening, when she was suddenly seized and a mittened hand placed firmly over her mouth. Almost maddened with fright, she struggled desperately to free herself, and to cry for help. But she was powerless in the strong arms which held her fast. As she was being borne off, she fought like a wildcat, tearing at her captor's face and cap, and clawing at his throat. But her efforts were all in vain, for she was carried rapidly away, and only when a camping-place was reached by the side of the trail was that pressing hand released from her mouth. Then by the light of the fire she saw that her captor was none other than Bill, the Slugger. Panting, she lay upon the bed of fir boughs where he had placed her. A triumphant light shone upon the man's face as he stepped back to view the girl.

"Well, what d'ye think of that for a job? Neat, wasn't it?"

Zell's fear had now given place to anger, and her eyes blazed as she sprang to her feet and faced the villain.

"You coward!" she cried. "You should be ashamed of yourself."

"H'm, I'm not worryin' about that, since I've got you. If I couldn't git ye one way, I had to try some other plan."

"You wouldn't talk so big if my father were here."

"Mebbe I wouldn't, me love. But he ain't here, so he don't matter. But, say, Zell, why can't ye like me? I'm crazy about you, an' if ye'll only let me, I'll do well by ye. I'll take ye outside an' show ye the wonderful sights, an' buy ye no end of purty dresses, an' sich things as women like. I swear I will."

He stepped toward her as if to clasp her in his arms. But Zell drew back and stood on the defensive.

"Don't touch me," she warned. "I hate you, Bill, and you know it. If you love me, why did you shoot Tim?"

"'Cause I love ye, of course. I couldn't bear to see anyone else have ye. That's why."

"Well, if you thought you could get me by shooting Tim, then you were mistaken. I love Tim as much as I hate you, so there."

"Ain't ye afraid to say sich a thing, Zell?" the man asked, while an ugly light leaped into his eyes. "Can't ye see that yer at my mercy now, an' that I kin do what I like with ye?"

"Can you?" The girl asked the question boldly, but her heart was beating wildly. She realised only too well how true were the man's words. Then she suddenly thought of something tucked away in a little pocket in the bosom of her dress. It gave her new encouragement. Yes, she would shoot him if necessary, although she did not wish to commit murder. She knew that he always carried a revolver, and could use it with lightning rapidity. She must act with extreme caution.

"Zell, I don't want to use force," the man said, "an' so I ask ye once more if ye'll be mine. If ye will,

then we'll go an' git the missionary at The Gap to hitch us up."

"Never!" The girl's voice rang out clear and defiant upon the still night air. She knew the man standing before her, and was fully aware that he was not sincere in his promises. He wanted her just to satisfy his passion, and then he would throw her aside as he had done a number of Indian girls he had deceived. She must stand her ground, and not give in to him.

As Zell uttered her stern refusal, the man calmly folded his arms and watched her. His greedy eyes took in her beauty, and the varying expressions upon her face, and the firm, lithe outlines of her tense body. He smiled, feeling certain that nothing now could come between him and the object of his desire.

"So that's final, is it?" he at length asked.

"It is," was the firm reply.

"Well, then you'll have to put up with the result. You are mine, and by G—, nothing can keep you from me."

He sprang suddenly forward as if to seize her. But Zell was watching, and quick as a cat she leaped aside, eluded his grasp, and sprang out upon the trail. With an angry oath, the man dashed after her. At times Zell glanced fearfully back, and noted that her pursuer was steadily gaining upon her. At length, seeing that she could not escape by flight, she suddenly stopped, wheeled, tore the revolver from her bosom and fired. With a yell of pain the man dropped upon the trail. In an instant he was on his knees, his revolver in his hand, blazing madly and wildly at the girl, once more fleeing for her life. Only when the firing ceased, and Zell was certain that she was at a safe distance, did she venture to stop and look back. She could see Bill on

the trail, upon his hands and knees, creeping, so it seemed to her, back to the fire. She breathed a sigh of relief, and tucked the revolver away in the bosom of her dress. A smile of triumph overspread her face as she thought of Bill's defeat, and the unexpected outcome of his plans. She was glad, though, that she had not killed him. But she must have wounded him severely to cause him to cry out as he did, and give up the pursuit.

The smile of triumph, however, passed swiftly from her face as she realised the difficult position in which she was placed. She must get back to the white woman as soon as possible. But she did not dare to return by the trail, for that would mean passing close to the man she had defied and wounded. He would make short work of her, she was certain, should she come within range of his revolver. The only plan left was to leave the trail, and circle around toward her own camping-place. She believed that she could do this without great difficulty, for most of the time she could travel among the big trees where the snow would not be so deep. If she only had her snow-shoes it would be an easy matter. She knew how anxious the nurse must be about her, so she was anxious to get back as soon as possible.

With another glance to make sure that Bill was not following her, she left the trail, plunged through the snow, and headed for the big trees beyond. It took her some time to do this, for the snow was deep and at times she was forced to stop and rest. But when she at last reached the heavy timber she breathed a sigh of relief. She felt safer now, being certain that it would not take her long to make her way to the camp. The walking was much easier here, and she sped on her

way, gliding noiselessly among the great trees. Her only fear now was of wolves, and she shuddered whenever she thought of the brutes which had attacked them that night. She wondered who had shot them, and why he had not made himself known. It could not have been Bill, as he would have said something about it. No, it must have been someone else, and she racked her brain in an effort to solve the mystery.

Although Zell was well accustomed to the trails, she knew very little about travelling through a trackless forest. Her years of training at the mission school had not prepared her for this phase of life. It was one thing to bound behind a team of dogs along a well-beaten trail, but it was an altogether different matter to find her way without a single guiding mark. She did not realise this, however, as she sped forward, expecting every minute to come in sight of the camp. She pictured the joy upon the nurse's face when she saw her, and what a story she would have to tell.

After she had travelled for some time and the camping-place had not been reached, she became somewhat anxious. She passed out of the heavy timber and came to the side of a hill where the trees were small and scarce. Here the snow was much deeper, making her progress difficult. The moon was shining big and bright, so she could see for some distance. Ahead, off to the left, was a thick wood, and there, so she believed, she would find the nurse. When she reached the place she was very weary, and could just drag herself out of the deep snow to the foot of a large pine. After she had rested a while, she continued on her way, moving slowly among the trees. Here there was little light, for the moon was not able to brighten those sombre depths. More anxious now than ever, she strained her

eyes for sight of the blazing fire, as she felt sure that the nurse would not allow it to go out. How interminable seemed that forest. The cold was intense, and notwithstanding her vigorous exercise, she shivered. She longed to lie down and rest, but such a thing she did not dare to do, knowing full well what that would mean.

At length, however, she was forced to sit down upon the root of a tree. She knew now that she was lost, and the thought filled her heart with terror. She had heard her father tell of men who had been lost in the forest and had never been heard of again. Would the same thing happen to her? she asked herself. No, it must not be. She would not die there alone. She would struggle on, and fight her way out.

But she soon found what it really meant to carry out such a resolve. It was a vast, desolate wilderness in which she was wandering, and she was but a speck creeping among the crowding trees. An hour passed and still Zell dragged forward her weary body. No longer was she the keen, active girl who had left Big Chance but a short time before. Instead, she was a pathetic creature, reaching out appealing arms, calling, ever calling for aid which did not come. Once she had dropped upon her knees in the snow and prayed earnestly for deliverance. She remembered that the missionary had often told the girls at the school that God would hear their prayers. She had prayed rather indifferently of late, but she now prayed as she had never prayed in her life. It brought her some comfort as she rose from her knees and staggered onward. But she could not make much progress. She was completely bewildered. She knew that she could follow her trail back, but she had not the strength. Ere long

she forgot even this as she floundered around in the snow. Strange noises sounded in her ears. She was sure that she heard the howling of wolves, and she shivered with fear. At times she was fighting with an imaginary enemy, and again shouting at the top of her voice. All sense of time and place was blotted out for her now as she stood knee-deep in the snow. She did not heed the merciless cold, nor the desolation of her surroundings. She was in another world of strange fancies. Sometimes she was with Tim, calling him endearing names, or pleading with him to come to her. Then she was at the mission school, talking and laughing with her companions.

But this excitement only tended to weaken her already tired body. Ere long her knees gave way beneath her. She sank upon the snow, and made no effort to rise. And there she lay, babbling of other days, while the pitiless cold struck deeper and deeper into her chilled body.

CHAPTER 11

Where Strength Counts

WHEN Hugo left the rock and fled from the presence of his enemies, he wished to get as far away as possible. But before doing so, he was determined to see Marion. He could not leave her alone in the cabin, so if she agreed he would endeavor to take her to The Gap. He would be running a great risk, he was well aware, but he could not do otherwise. How he longed to go to her, speed with her to Swift Stream and thence outside. But he knew that would have to be postponed for a while, and perhaps for all time.

He thought of this as he hurried on his way beneath the brow of the high hill, taking special care to keep out of sight of the Police. When he was sure that he would not be observed, he cautiously approached the trail, sped across it, and plunged into the thick woods on the lower side. Had he gone a couple of hundred yards farther on he would have come across the straggling trail made by the half-breed girl when she, too, had sought the shelter of those friendly trees. Of this Hugo was totally unaware as he moved rapidly forward. At times he was but a few rods from where Zell had travelled. Had Hugo swung a little more to the right, and the girl somewhat more to the left, their

trails would have met, and how much that would have meant to one, at least.

“Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away.”

To Hugo the trackless wilds were as an open book, and he was as sure of his course as if on a well-beaten trail. Years of experience had developed his sense of direction, and he pressed steadily onward without the slightest hesitation. It was only when he came near his cabin did he slacken his speed and peer cautiously forward and around. Silence reigned everywhere as he stepped from his snow-shoes, pushed gently open the door and entered. The dog bounded to meet him, but Hugo motioning him to be still, looked toward the bunk. Marion was lying where he had left her, but she was now awake. She smiled as she saw her father standing there. Then she sat quickly up, an anxious expression showing in her eyes.

“Did you find Zell?” she asked. “Oh, I know you didn’t,” she added. “She is not with you.”

“I didn’t find her,” Hugo replied. “I have proof, though, that she was carried off by someone.”

“Oh!” It was all that Marion said, as she waited for further information.

In a few words Hugo told her what he had discovered, the signs of struggle in the snow, and the blood marks by the ashes of the camping-place.

“Oh, what can we do?” Marion asked, slipping from the bunk and standing before her father. “Can we not follow her, and rescue her from her captors?”

Before Hugo could reply, a bark from the dog, which had gone outside, startled him, causing him to bound to

the door. For a second he listened intently, and when he turned around Marion was surprised at the fierce look in his eyes.

"The Police!" he growled. "They're coming up the trail! I must be off at once. They'll look after you."

"Oh, don't go," Marion pleaded. "I don't want to lose you. Why are you so afraid of the Police?"

Hugo made no reply. He left the room, stepped into his snow-shoes, and ordering the dog to remain behind, plunged into a thicket of firs and jack-pines on the upper side of the cabin. His heart was filled with bitterness and hatred as he moved forward. For years he had been fleeing from the Police, ever hounded from place to place. Formerly it had not mattered so much, as he had refuges to which he could go. But now it was different. He wanted to stay with Marion and give up his endless wandering life. But it could not be. The Police were everywhere, tireless and alert.

Ascending the hill which stretched along back of the cabin, he at length stopped at a spot where he could obtain a fairly good view of what was taking place down below. He saw the Police come to the trail leading to the cabin, where they paused to investigate. He could see Sergeant North advancing alone, so he knew that he would soon be with Marion. That she meant anything to him Hugo had not the least idea. Had he known of their love for each other, his troubles would have been greatly increased. Would Marion tell the sergeant of his whereabouts? What reason would she have for keeping silent?

He thought of all this as he crouched there. Then, knowing that to remain longer would be of no avail, he slipped away, sped along the side of the hill, and crossed the main trail half a mile or more farther on.

Far away beyond the valley he had another cabin, and there he decided to go for food and rest.

Shaping his course by a distant mountain peak, he strode rapidly onward. Anger and disappointment raged in his bosom, as with great swinging strides he plowed through the snow down toward the valley below. He did not mind the cold, neither did the sombre forest have any terror for him. In fact, he would have welcomed another encounter with a pack of wolves. He was in a fighting mood and would have proven a stern antagonist to any living creature attempting to oppose him.

Passing through a heavy tract of timber he came out into a region where the trees were small and scattered. Here the snow was deep and in places it had been whipped by the wind in long drifts. Part way across this desolate stretch he came suddenly upon a straggling trail which caused him to stop and examine it with the greatest attention. He could easily tell that it was made by a human being floundering wildly along. He looked first to the right and then to the left, wondering which way the traveller had gone.

"What in time could anyone be doing here without snow-shoes?" he asked himself. "Why, the fellow must be crazy!"

Then an illuminating idea flashed through his mind. It must be the half-breed girl! She had no doubt escaped from her captor, and in trying to get back to her camping-place had lost her way. But where was Bill? Why had he not followed her? Then he thought of the blood he had seen upon the snow by the cold ashes. Had the girl in some way wounded him? Perhaps she was armed, and had disabled the villain.

Thinking thus, he decided that the girl had gone up

the valley, and could not be very far away, judging by the depth of the snow, and the crookedness of her trail. Forgotten were his own troubles as he thought of the girl's desperate situation. He must follow after and do what he could for her welfare, providing she were still alive.

It did not take Hugo long to speed across the snowy waste, and reach a thicket of trees beyond. But at every stride his eyes were upon the marks in the snow. At times he saw where the girl had circled to the right and then to the left, showing plainly the bewildered state of her mind. He could not tell how long before she had passed that way. If but a few minutes, he might be able to save her. But if an hour, or even less, had elapsed, he feared he might be too late. But with feverish haste he pressed onward, entered the thicket, passed through and came out shortly on the opposite side. Here he halted and looked around. It was a region over which a fire had swept the year before, and forms of trees stood gaunt and bare. His eyes searched keenly for some moving object in the midst of the mass of upturned roots and fallen trees. But no sign of life could he see.

He was about to continue his journey when a peculiar sound fell upon his ears. Listening intently, he found that it came from the left. It was like a human voice, yet he could not distinguish what was being said. He knew that it must be the girl, and his heart leaped with hope as he hurried forward. It took him only a few minutes to reach the place where Zell was lying upon the snow, still babbling and crooning about other days.

"Hello, girl, what are you doing here?" Hugo demanded.

But Zell gave no sign of recognition. She kept on

talking, all the time clawing at the snow with her mittened hands. In an instant Hugo knew what was the trouble. The girl's mind was affected by the experience through which she had recently passed. He stood for a few seconds looking upon her, while an overwhelming rage welled up in his heart against the villain responsible for her sad condition. He longed to track him, and bestow upon him the punishment he rightly deserved. But he had no time to think about such things now, as the girl demanded his immediate attention. He must do something for her welfare. But what could he do? He thought of his cabin on the hillside which he had left but a short time before. That was the place where he should take the girl, for Marion was there to attend to her. But to go back was out of the question. The Police were there. No, he must take the girl to his cabin beyond the valley toward which he was headed. It would be a difficult task, he was well aware, to carry the girl all that distance. But he knew that he could do it, for she was slight while he was very strong.

He was about to stoop and lift her from the snow, when Zell tottered to her feet, and looked wildly around. Her eyes were wide with terror, and she pressed fearfully back from some imaginary foe.

"Keep back! Keep back!" she shrieked. "Oh! Oh!"

"Hush," Hugo ordered, laying his hand upon her shoulder. "I won't let anything harm you."

But the girl shrank aside at his touch, and beat the air with her hands.

"The wolves! The wolves!" she cried. "They are upon me! Don't let them get me!"

To attempt to reason with the girl Hugo knew would be useless. He must get her to the cabin as speedily

as possible. Stooping, he lifted her from the snow, and with her in his arms he started forward. For a few minutes Zell struggled and screamed so furiously that Hugo found it difficult to make much progress. But at length she quieted down, and lay panting in his arms. At first he did not mind her weight, but after he had travelled some distance he was forced to lay her down in the snow to relieve his aching arms. Then up and on again over that desolate waste.

The dawn of a new day found Hugo about half a mile from his cabin. He was walking slowly now, for he was greatly exhausted. His coat he had taken off and wrapped it carefully around the girl. Even then he feared lest she should freeze, for the night was very cold. He even wondered at himself as he bore his burden up hills, across valleys, and through thick forests. He could not account for his sympathy for this poor demented half-breed girl. It was a feeling similar to that which had animated his soul when he had journeyed with the little child from the river to the hospital. Time and time again he had rescued sick and injured miners and prospectors, and had taken them to the nearest mining camp. He had done it because there was nothing else to do, and he could not leave them to perish. He had felt a certain degree of pity for them, but his heart had never been stirred in such a manner as when caring for the child and especially the girl. She had been deeply wronged, so perhaps that was the reason, for Hugo was ever the champion of the ill-treated.

Slowly the moon faded off in the west as the weary man plodded onward. The sun rose above the mountain peaks, and skimmed low along the eastern horizon. Ere long Hugo could see the spot where nestled his

little cabin, and with a great sigh of relief he climbed the hill, reached the door, pushed it open and entered. Upon a rude bunk on one side of the room he laid the helpless girl. Tired though he was, he at once started a fire in the little camping-stove, and prepared some food from a supply he always kept on hand. In a short time he had heated some stewed moose meat left from his last meal there, and forced a few spoonfuls between the girl's firm-set teeth. It was all that he could do except cover her with two thick gray four-point blankets. He stood watching her as she lay there, now asleep, worn out with the fatigue of the night. What was he to do with her? he wondered. Where could he take her? That she needed more attention than he could give her, he was certain. But where could he go for assistance?

Hugo thought of these things as he ate his supper, and afterwards sat smoking near the stove. It felt good to be back once more in the shelter of his own cabin, and but for his worry about the girl he would have felt quite happy. He mused upon the events of the day and wondered how Marion was getting along. He was quite sure that she would go away with the Police, but just where he had no idea. He did not feel so bitter now about being driven forth into the night. If he had remained there with Marion the half-breed girl would surely have perished. During his long sojourn in the wilderness Hugo had often puzzled over the mystery of life. Notwithstanding his spirit of rebellion for man-made law, deep down in his heart there was a profound respect for the unchanging law of Nature. As he journeyed along the trails; as he watched the western sky burnished with the glory of the setting sun; as he faced the furious storms of win-

ter, or stood in some great silent valley, he had learned over and over again that there was no effect without some corresponding cause. He never could believe that things happened according to blind chance. Several times he had tried to force himself to that way of thinking, but all in vain. The great book spread out before him was so unmistakably clear that he could never remain in doubt for any length of time.

So sitting now in the silent cabin he thought of the events which had led him to the side of that lost girl. At first appearance it seemed as if those two guardians of the North were the cause. But the more he thought about it, the more convinced he became that they were but instruments in the hands of a greater force, a Divine power overruling all things. What had led them so unerringly that night from the distant trail where he had seen them the day before? What had changed their course? He could arrive at only one conclusion, and it filled his soul with awe. It thrilled him, too, making him feel that he was surrounded by a sustaining influence working on his behalf. He suddenly thought of the night he had spent in the shack with the sleeping child, and the wonderful vision he had there beheld of the mysterious light, and the strange presence hovering over the little one.

For some time Hugo sat there, thinking of these things. The transformation which had been going on in his soul of late was steadily gaining in strength. A new vision had come to him, and with the vision was a new desire. He felt that he was no longer merely Hugo, the trapper, the outcast, but an instrument in the hands of an unseen power. He looked toward the sleeping girl, and felt that in some way she was being used as an important instrument in the shaping of his

life. And as he watched her, his future line of action became strangely clear, and a new sense of power possessed his entire being.

Rising suddenly from his seat, he passed out of the cabin and laid his hands upon a small toboggan half-buried in the snow. This he carried into the room, and placed it near the stove. When it was well thawed out and dry, he began to repair the broken parts. With strong moose-hide thongs he deftly repaired the damages wrought by many a hard trail. He then laid the toboggan aside, stepped across the room and examined his scanty supply of provisions upon a rough shelf fastened to the wall.

CHAPTER 12

Confession

AFTER Hugo had left the cabin on the hillside in such an abrupt manner, Marion stood for a few seconds greatly concerned over his strange action. Then she hurried to the little window and tried to look out. But the frost was so thick upon the small panes of glass that she could see nothing. She listened intently, and in a few seconds heard the jingle of bells mingled with the short sharp yelps of dogs. Her father had spoken of the Police, but she had no idea that any members of the Force were anywhere near. Could it be possible that the one for whom she so earnestly longed had happened that way? Had he tracked her father to the little cabin? If so, what should she do? Would it be right for her to tell the sergeant that he had just left her?

Marion had little time, however, to think of such things, for soon the door was pushed open and Sergeant North looked cautiously in. In his right hand he held a revolver as if expecting opposition. As he stood waiting for the owner of the cabin to approach, Marion stepped from the window and confronted him. So great was the sergeant's surprise that he moved quickly back as if he had beheld a ghost. Then seeing who it was, he thrust his weapon into its holster, and springing forward, caught Marion in his arms. Their lips met and for a few heart-beats neither spoke.

"My! this is a surprise," North exclaimed as he drew back his head and looked into her beaming eyes. "I was expecting something altogether different from this."

"You were looking for trouble, from all appearances," Marion laughingly replied. "I'm glad you have put that nasty thing away. I don't like it."

"I was looking for trouble," North confessed, "although, for once I'm glad I didn't find it."

"But perhaps you have found it," Marion bantered. "You have found me, and I'm certain that I'm going to be the greatest trouble of all."

"I'll like you all the better, then," and again North kissed her. "You cannot frighten me that way, remember. Facing trouble has been my lot for years, and I've not had too much of it yet."

"But this is a different kind, John. You are thinking only about men. Just wait and see what trouble one woman can make."

"Oh, I'm not worrying about that, darling," the sergeant assured her with a hearty laugh. "It will be a change, anyway."

Rolfe's voice outside speaking sharply to the dogs brought a serious expression to North's face. Love for the moment had interfered with duty, and that was contrary to the strict code to which he was bound.

"Where is the man who owns this cabin?" he suddenly asked.

"I do not know," Marion truthfully replied.

"But he was here a short time ago, was he not?"

"Yes."

"And he brought you here?"

"He did. But for him I do not know what I should have done. Tell me, have you seen Zell?"

"Zell! Zell who?"

"The half-breed girl who was travelling with me. We were camping by the side of the trail, and after the wolves had been shot, she went for some wood. But she never came back, and I am afraid she is either lost or something has carried her off."

"And did those wolves now lying dead down there attack you?" North asked in surprise.

"They did. Oh, it was terrible!"

"Who shot them?"

"Hugo, the trapper. The wolves surrounded us, coming closer and closer all the time, and when they were about to spring upon us, some one began shooting at them. We could not see who it was, although I know now that it was the trapper. He carried me part way here."

"He did!" There was a peculiar expression in the sergeant's eyes as he kept them fixed upon Marion's face?

"So it was Hugo," he mused. "It's too bad I wasn't on hand sooner."

"Why, what would you have done, John?" Marion asked.

"Rescued you, of course."

"Anything else?"

"And captured Hugo."

"Why?"

"I want him. He's the man I'm after, and I shall never give up until I get him."

"Why are you chasing him? What has he done?"

"That's what I want to find out. He is needed in connection with that murder near the C. D. Cut-Off."

"I don't believe he did that," Marion defended. "He

may be rough, but he would never do such a terrible thing."

"Why has he acted in such a strange manner, then? Why didn't he report the murder when he brought the child to the hospital? And why is he now running away?"

"Hasn't he been keeping away from the Police for years, long before that murder was committed? I often heard at Kynox that he dreaded the sight of a member of the Force. Haven't you been after him for a long time?"

"Why, no," the sergeant denied. "We had no orders to capture him. We always looked upon him as a strange man, rough, and terrible in a fight, but otherwise perfectly harmless."

"You have orders to capture him now, though?"

"In a way I have. He may be innocent, but he must tell what he knows about that murder."

"And you intend to follow him?"

"I certainly do. But we cannot go just now, for the dogs are about played out. We travelled hard all last night, without rest or food. But here comes Tom. He's almost starved, and so am I."

The constable was surprised and pleased to see Marion. He was very tired, and the presence of this woman gave a touch of home life to the cabin. Marion insisted upon preparing breakfast with some of the provisions the men had brought with them. There was no table in the room, so North and Rolfe squatted upon the floor, each holding his tin plate on his lap which Marion had filled with hot canned pork and beans.

"There is not much style about this," she laughingly remarked.

"Style!" the constable exclaimed. "To have a

woman serve us is all the style I want. Why, I've been cooking for months, and am heartily sick of it. I would give almost anything to be back in my own home, to see my mother working around the kitchen, and to hear her say, 'Tom, will you have another piece of pie?' I never fully appreciated her and her cooking until I came to this canned-food country."

Both Marion and the sergeant laughed heartily at the doleful expression upon Rolfe's face.

"Tom never wearies of telling about his mother's wonderful cooking," the sergeant explained. "I wish to goodness he had taken a few lessons from her before he left home."

"You eat all I cook, though," the constable retorted.

"I have to or starve. You won't let me do any cooking, although I am in command."

"Self-preservation is a strong feature in my make-up, Miss Brisbane. The sergeant is teachable for all that, so with little tact you may be able to train him properly."

There was a fine spirit of comradeship between these two men, who spent so much time together on the long trails. They knew each other thoroughly, and their light banter was merely an offset to the difficulty and seriousness of their tasks. The commanding officer who had sent them forth together had made no mistake in his knowledge of men. Rolfe's bright and buoyant disposition was an excellent balance to North's stern and somewhat taciturn nature.

When breakfast was over, Rolfe insisted upon washing the few dishes. He then spread out his blankets in one corner of the room, and stretched out his tired body. Marion and North sat near the stove side by side. For a while they were silent, rejoicing in each

other's presence, for silence is often more eloquent than many words. When at length Rolfe's heavy breathing told them that he was asleep, North reached out, took Marion's right hand in his, and pressed it firmly.

"It is great to be here so near you," he began. "You have been so much in my mind, and I was wondering how you were making out at Big Chance. Never for an instant did I picture you away out here. Tell me all about it."

"There really isn't much to tell other than what you already know," Marion replied. "I am so worried about that poor girl. I am sure that something has happened to her. And she was so anxious about her injured lover, Tim, and wanted to get to the missionary at The Gap for help as fast as possible."

"And so you came with her for company? Is that it?"

"Oh, no," Marion replied in a low voice. "I heard something at Big Chance which worried me, so I came along hoping to find you and to warn you."

"To warn me!" North exclaimed in surprise. "What for?"

"Yes, to warn you against danger. I heard something about Bill, the Slugger. From what Zell told me, I fear that he intends to do you some harm. At first the girl hesitated about telling me anything. She was terribly afraid of Bill, and begged me not to say a word to you lest he should kill her."

The sergeant was all attention now, eager to hear more. He believed that the half-breed girl knew something which was most important for him to know.

"Did she say anything about that murder near the C. D. Cut-Off?" he questioned.

"Not directly. But when I asked her if Bill did it,

she gave a start, and glanced anxiously toward the door. 'I don't dare to tell,' she said. 'Bill would kill me if I did.'"

"Ah!" The sergeant was looking straight before him, and his eyes were merely two narrow slits. He was thinking rapidly, comprehending things which he had never suspected.

"What else did the girl say?" he presently asked.

"She begged me not to tell you for fear of what Bill might do. She said he was getting ready for a trip, and was almost frightened out of his wits while you were at Big Chance. Zell, it seems, was secretly watching him."

"Had she any idea where he was going?"

"Yes. She was certain that he was planning to leave the country by way of The Gap, and cross the mountains."

"I see, I see," North mused. "Yes, a most likely thing for him to do. My, this is important news to me, you have helped me wonderfully."

"And you will follow him?" There was a quiver in Marion's voice. "Oh, do be careful! Zell said that Bill was such a bad man that he would stop at nothing, and would even shoot a member of the Force if he opposed him."

"And so you started out to warn me, eh?" North queried. "Did you realise the risks you were running? Did you stop to think what a trip to The Gap would mean at this time of the year? Why, it almost unnerves me to think of what might have happened to you. It is mighty lucky that you have come off so well."

"I am afraid that I didn't think much about the risk,

but acted merely upon the impulse of the moment when I agreed to come with Zell."

"And so you did all this for my sake?" North asked, pressing Marion's hand a little firmer. "I am sure that no one else in the world would do such a thing for me."

"Love nerves the most timid, John, and transforms weakness into strength. But I have a confession to make now which no doubt will surprise you."

"Make all the confession you like, little one," was the quiet reply. "What confession can you make that will interfere with our great love?"

"I hope it won't, anyway," and Marion gave a deep sigh. North noted this and looked somewhat anxiously into her face.

"Is it as serious as all that?" he asked. "Is it troubling you much?"

"It is, and has been worrying me for days. How would you like to be told that you do not share all my love?"

"Why, Marion, what do you mean?" North demanded. "Or are you only joking?"

"No, I am not. I am deadly in earnest. I came out here not only for your sake but for the sake of another man as well."

"You did!" It was all that North could say as he dropped Marion's hand and stared at her in amazement. "For God's sake, who is it? Tell me quick."

"It is the man who brought me to this cabin."

"What! Hugo, the trapper?"

"Yes, he is the man. I came to warn you not only against Bill, the Slugger, but to keep you and the trapper from harming each other. I did it because I love you both."

"Marion! Marion! What do you mean?" North

demanded, rising to his feet in his agitation. "You love Hugo, the trapper, you say?"

"I do, and I have a right to because he is my father."

At this confession, made in a low voice, North's tense body relaxed. His eyes brightened, and a smile illumined his face. Sitting down again by Marion's side, he tenderly placed his arm about her and drew her close.

"So that was your trouble, darling, was it?" he asked. "Well, now that your confession is made, don't worry any more. It is startling, I admit, and I know you will explain everything to me. I am so glad it was your father and not somebody else."

"Oh, I feel so relieved," Marion replied, letting her head rest against her lover's shoulder. There were tears in her eyes, and her body was trembling slightly. "I know it won't make any difference to you in carrying out your orders, but it will help us to work together, will it not?"

"Indeed it will," was the emphatic reply. "Knowing what I do now about Bill, the Slugger, and also who Hugo is, certain difficulties have been removed. I see quite a clear trail ahead of me, thanks to your love and help."

CHAPTER 18

The Rush of Doom

THE gigantic mass of the Golden Horn was a deceptive monster. From all quarters it formed an unerring guide to travellers on the trails. Its towering peak when touched by the sun was the admiration of all who beheld it. From a distance it often seemed like a fairy land, especially when sun and wavering clouds became entangled in a mesh of surpassing glory. But to veterans of the north, both Indians and whites, it was a demon to be feared when the snows of numerous winter storms lay thick upon its sides. Huge banks, steadily increasing, would cling for weeks, and sometimes months, in deep crevices. When at last the weight became so tremendous that the mass could hold no longer, it would slip from its place with the roar of thunder, and tear down the mountain side. At times it would start without any apparent reason, even in the finest of weather, carrying destruction to all before it. In former days the Indians looked upon the Golden Horn as the special abode of the Great Spirit. When he smiled in the glory of the sun-crowned summit they were happy, knowing that the god was pleased. But when he raged in the furious tempests, and hurled forth his avalanches of death-dealing snow, then he was angry, and they offered to him gifts of meat, furs, and blankets. As a rule they shunned in winter the mountain route between the Great River and The Gap,

preferring the longer way beyond the valley. But some hardy souls, especially among the whites, made use of the dangerous trail, and laughed at the fears of others.

The day of Marion's confession in the little cabin the Golden Horn never looked more beautiful or benign. It seemed to smile its benediction on all sides, especially upon the lovers as they stood before the cabin ready to depart for The Gap, whither they had decided to go. All, excepting the sergeant, were rested, dinner had been eaten, and the dogs harnessed, with Zell's four added to the team. With Marion on the sled surrounded by blankets, small bags of food, and a few cooking utensils, the command "mush on" was given, the whip in North's hand snapped like a pistol shot, and they were off. How the dogs did race over the snow. They seemed to be conscious of the burden they bore, and the need for haste. Notwithstanding the sense of security with the strong men following, Marion's heart was heavy. She was ever thinking of Zell, and her unbounded animation the day they had pulled out from Big Chance. Where was the girl now? she wondered. Was she lying somewhere upon the snow, silent in death? Perhaps she had fallen among wolves, or worse still into the hands of Bill, the Slugger. The sergeant had told her about that other camping-place he had found by the side of the trail, which had not been there the evening she and Zell passed that way. It could not have been made by her father, she was certain, because his own little cabin was so near. No, some one must have been following them, and had made off with the half-breed girl.

North's thoughts, too, were of a serious nature. He had many things to think about since his conversation with Marion in the cabin. What connection had

her father with that murder? Why did he fear the Police if he were innocent? But he had been fleeing from them for years, so it seemed. And where was Bill, the Slugger? He strongly suspected him now in connection with that murder. It was most likely that he would try to escape by way of The Gap, for to try any other easterly route to reach the outside in the winter time would be madness. It was important, therefore, that he should reach The Gap ahead of the villain. And where was the half-breed girl? He needed her, for she evidently knew a great deal. Perhaps Bill would have her with him, and if so, he could take both together. For the present he would abandon his pursuit of Hugo, the trapper. He could get him later to tell what he knew after he had rounded up Bill and the girl.

Steadily the dogs raced the low sun out of the heavens that short winter afternoon. Twilight tarried for a space, and then night enshrouded the land. And with the darkness came a halt, a camping-place was selected, and preparations made for the night. Soon, in a snug lean-to, Marion sat upon a robe spread over a bed of fir boughs. Rolfe attended to the cooking of the supper, and ere long the appetizing odor of frying moose-meat steak pervaded the air. He refused to allow Marion to assist, contending that he was going to prove to her the falseness of the sergeant's charge.

"He says I can't cook," he remarked as he turned the meat in the frying-pan. "But I'm going to let you judge for yourself, Miss Brisbane. That will be the best answer I can make."

"Oh, Tom is putting on his best frills now," North retorted, straightening himself from his work of building another lean-to on the opposite side of the fire.

"When he has a woman to cook for, he is mighty particular."

"It's well that I am along, then," Marion smilingly replied. "But you don't look starved," she reminded, glancing admiringly at the stalwart, handsome man before her.

When Rolfe had the meat browned to his satisfaction, the "sourdough" potatoes fried, and the tea made, he called aloud, "Dinner all ready on the dining-car. That's what an Indian guide I once had always used to say," he explained. "If you can't have certain things, it is often good to imagine that you have them. That was the way with my Indian."

After supper was over, the dogs were fed, and the constable gathered a supply of wood for the night. Then around the bright fire the three sat and talked for some time. It was not of the North they talked, but of bygone days in their old homes. It was a comfort to turn for a time from the cruel trail and the hardships of a desolate, snow-bound region to other scenes, glorified and made beautiful by the sacred fire of memory.

At length they slept, Marion in her little lean-to, and the men in the other. Silence reigned over the land, broken only by the crackling of the fire or the snapping of a frost-stung tree. The dogs made no sound as they slept curled up close to the fire. Not a breath of wind stirred the most sensitive topmost points of the firs and jack-pines. The sky was cloudless, and the Northern Lights streamed and wavered in the heavens. Above towered the Golden Horn, silent and unseen.

As the night wore on, the fire died down, until only a few glowing ashes remained. Sergeant North stirred

in his sleep and drew his blanket closer around his body. Then he woke with a start, and sat bolt upright. What was that peculiar sound away to the left? He listened with straining ears, and in an instant he understood its meaning. It was a snow-slide, sweeping down upon them with a roar of thunder! With a yell that brought Rolfe to his feet, startled and dazed, North leaped across the dying embers, caught Marion in his arms, sprang back again, and staggered with his burden out upon the trail. No time had he to explain to the frightened woman the meaning of his strange action, for the roar of the onrushing avalanche was becoming louder every instant. He could hear the great trees above him crashing before the weight of the mighty demon. Could he escape with his precious burden? On and on he sped, a wild desperation adding strength to his efforts. Then in a twinkling he was hurled off his feet, and engulfed in a blinding, smothering mass of whirling snow. Away he was carried, clutching frantically the form in his arms. He was helpless to raise a hand of defense. He felt like a man carried onward by a mighty current, now sucking him down, then whirling him to the surface. The weight pressing upon him was terrible. It was crushing the life out of him. At times he could not breathe, and his brain reeled in his mad tumultuous rush. But still he clutched Marion's body, fearful lest she should be torn from his arms. Then he felt a sudden freedom. The pressing weight relaxed, and the invigorating air filled his lungs. One more blinding swish and swirl, and he was hurled into something soft, where he lay half-dazed and panting.

A low moan aroused him, and with an effort he struggled to his knees, and groped around. His hands

touched Marion's body. He had not lost her, but what had happened to her during that wild catapulting down the hillside? Perhaps she was badly injured. Weak though he was, he caught her in his arms, and lifted her partly from the snow which entangled her.

"Marion! Marion! are you hurt?" he asked.

Receiving no reply, a great fear swept over him. Was she dead! He put his ear close to her face and listened. She was breathing, but so low that he could hardly detect it. Then he straightened up, and looked anxiously around. What was he to do? How far had they been swept in the wild rush? The moon had already risen, so he could dimly see the great scar left by the snow-slide. It had plowed its way down through the forest, and broken trees lined the path the monster had taken. He shuddered as he thought of their narrow escape. But where was Rolfe? Had he been carried down to destruction? The idea was terrible. But he had no time now to spend upon vain lamentations. Marion needed assistance, and at once. It was no use, he well knew, to go back to the trail. Their camp had gone, so he might as well stay where he was. Looking around, he saw several dead trees. From these he broke off a number of dry branches, and brushing away the snow from the roots of a big fir, he lighted a fire. Scraping back more snow, he cut some boughs with his big pocket-knife, and then spread them near the cheerful blaze. Here he carried Marion and laid her tenderly down. He could see her face plainly now, and it was very white. How still she was! Again he stooped and listened. Then he kissed her, calling to her, and begging her to speak to him.

In a few minutes he had his reward, for with a

weary sigh, Marion opened her eyes and looked absently into his face.

"Marion! Marion!" he cried. "Don't you know me? It is your own John. Speak to me, and tell me if you are hurt."

Slowly the girl's senses returned. Seeing who it was bending over her, a slight smile overspread her face, and her lips moved, although she uttered no sound.

Leaving her, North piled more sticks upon the fire. He next cut down an extra supply of boughs, with which he fashioned a cozy little lean-to about his loved one. For a while she paid no heed to what he was doing. Her eyes, however, followed his movements, and at last she called faintly to him. With a bound the sergeant was at her side, kneeling upon the robe and bending tenderly over her.

"Where am I?" Marion asked.

"Right here with me," North replied. "You are safe."

"What happened, John? I thought the world had come to an end."

"It was a snow-slide. But we were wonderfully delivered, just how I do not know now. Are you hurt, dear?"

"No, I guess not. I am only very weak. But where is the constable?"

Then seeing the anxious expression which swept over the sergeant's face, she quickly continued: "Oh, I know. He was carried away. Isn't it terrible!"

"It certainly is, Marion. I am afraid the poor fellow was swept down in that wild rush. It was almost a miracle that we escaped as we did. Another second and it would have been too late."

For a few heart-beats there was silence, their minds

filled with such thoughts which only come to people who have stood face to face with death.

"What are we to do, John?" Marion at length asked. "I suppose the dogs were lost, too, as well as the camping outfit."

"Everything is gone, no doubt," was the quiet reply. "In all my experience on the trails I have never run up against anything like this. Snow-slides are common on the mountain side, but hitherto I have always managed to escape them."

"And to think that I should be with you, John, to add to your trouble."

"Don't, don't say that, darling," North pleaded, as he kissed her upon the lips, and was pleased to see the color flood her cheeks. "You will be a help to me instead of a hindrance. We shall get out of this, all right."

Notwithstanding the sergeant's words of encouragement, he fully realised the seriousness of their situation. Twenty miles from The Gap, with no food and no dogs, and with a woman unaccustomed to the trail made their plight appalling. How helpless they were, mere pigmies in that vast wilderness of forest, snow, and stinging cold. Then, in addition to all these, should a storm sweep upon them, their case would be hopeless.

CHAPTER 14

Life for Life

THE sergeant picked up a piece of wood and was about to throw it on the fire, when a shout in the direction of the trail arrested his attention. He dropped the stick, stared in amazement, his heart beating fast. At first he thought he must have been mistaken, but when the shout was repeated he answered with a whoop that echoed through the forest's silent reaches. Ere long he heard the sound of someone plowing his way through the snow, straight toward him. In a few minutes Rolfe appeared, his face very white, except one cheek which was streaked with blood, and his clothes torn. For an instant he stared first at the sergeant and then at Marion, who had risen to a sitting position. Then overcome by weakness and excitement, he dropped upon the snow near the fire. His hands clawed the air, as if warding off some invisible foe. His eyes were big with terror. North stepped to his side and laid a firm hand upon his shoulder.

"Come, buck up, old man," he ordered. "You're all right."

That touch and the friendly word of cheer brought Rolfe to his senses. The wild expression left his eyes, and his uplifted hands dropped.

"Lord, it was awful!" he moaned. "It was hell let loose."

Then he looked over at Marion.

"Excuse me, Miss Brisbane," he apologized. "But I am hardly myself after what I have just gone through. I am mighty glad, though, to find you and the sergeant safe. How in the world did you escape? I was sure that you were buried down there in the valley."

"We do not know how we escaped," Marion replied, while a tremor shook her body. "The Lord must have been with us, I guess. But we got off better than you did. Something has happened to you. There is blood upon your face."

"Oh, it's nothing, I assure you, Miss Brisbane, Something hit me a glancing blow, a broken limb of a tree, I think, as I was struggling out of the clutch of that monster. I was only a few steps behind you, and how I got clear I have no idea. It was a terrible fight, and I was nearly smothered. Then the first thing I knew I was wedged up against a tree till I thought every bone in my body was being crushed. I lost consciousness and when I came to everything was still, and I was lying at the foot of a big fir with snow all around me. I was sure that you two were gone and that I alone was saved."

"Why did you shout if you thought we were lost?" North asked.

"I hardly know why, except that I was half crazy and just whooped. I guess I was just like an infant crying in the night, and with no language but a cry. I must have done it unconsciously."

"It was mighty lucky you did, Rolfe, for I never thought of looking for you up there. But I don't think you can help us out any. We're in a bad fix, with not a scrap of food."

"I know it," the constable replied. "One of us will have to foot it, I guess, to The Gap for grub. There's

nothing here. We might get a few rabbits or ptarmigan. Now, if I had my rifle, I might get a moose, for they're quite thick down there in the valley along that wild meadow. But what can one do with a revolver, for that's all I have left."

"Same here," North replied. "I was afraid I had lost mine but it's all right. Now, look, something's got to be done at once if we're going to have any breakfast. You stay here with Marion and keep the fire going. I'm anxious to see what pranks that snow-slide has cut up where it stopped. I have heard men tell queer stories about such things, but always believed they were lying. I hope to goodness they weren't."

"Will you be gone long, John?" Marion anxiously asked. "Don't run any risk."

"There is no danger," North assured. "It should not take me many minutes. I hope to get something for breakfast."

The sergeant made his way to the great scar caused by the snow-slide, and found easy walking here. It did not take him long to descend the steep hill, the big moon making the night almost as bright as day. He was astonished at the havoc which had been wrought by the descending monster. Large trees had been snapped like pipe stems before the terrific impact of thousands of tons of snow and ice, and hurled in a confused and gigantic mass down into the valley. He followed the course until he came to the level where the avalanche had been stayed. When he could proceed no farther on the clean-swept way, he plunged into the snow to the right and began to circle the heaped-up mass. He kept a sharp look-out, hoping to find some portion of the camping outfit. But nothing could he

see. Dogs, food, sleds and provisions had evidently been buried far out of sight.

After he had gone some distance, surprised at the width of the slide, he decided to return. The snow was deep and the travelling difficult. There was nothing that he could see except snow and tangled masses of trees. He stopped and looked keenly in every direction, but not a sign of bird or animal could he see. He knew that farther away he might come across something, but he had not the strength to battle for any distance through such deep snow. Sergeant North was not easily discouraged, but a hopeless feeling now smote his heart. What was he to do? How could he or Rolfe ever reach The Gap without snow-shoes? It would take days to go and return with food, but if overtaken by a storm, the journey would be impossible. Marion could not make the journey, he was well aware, for if a strong man accustomed to the trails would find the task an Herculean one, what could a frail woman do? There was Hugo's cabin to which they might return. But that, too, was a long way back, and they would be but little better off when they got there, as far as food was concerned.

He thought, too, of the valuable time he was losing. Bill, the Slugger, would reach The Gap and escape to the mountains far beyond the strong arm of the law. What would his commanding officer think of him? He knew the stern code of the Force and what was expected of every member, and here he was tricked by circumstances over which he had no control.

He was about to retrace his steps when a slight noise just ahead arrested his attention. He whipped his revolver from its holster, and peered forward, keenly alert. For a few seconds he could see nothing. Then

he noticed a slight movement in the snow near a mass of tangled trees. Cautiously advancing, he ere long saw something which thrilled his whole being. It was a moose, entrapped in the very forefront of the avalanche, and feebly threshing its great antlers in its death struggle. Drawing nearer, North saw that the animal's hinder parts were caught and crushed beneath a heavy tree while the rest of its body was free. He knew now that what he had been told was no fiction, that moose, bear, deer, and lesser animals were sometimes overwhelmed as they sped before the terror of the mountains. This animal had evidently been caught off guard near where the snow-slide had stopped. That the brute had made a desperate fight was most apparent, and as North stood watching its now feeble efforts a feeling of pity welled up in his heart for this unfortunate creature. But what was death to one was life to others, so drawing forth his sheath-knife, he at once put the animal out of misery.

This sudden and unexpected incident filled North with renewed hope. There before him was food to last for several days. And the skin, which could be cut into long strips, what possibilities lay in that! He did not attempt to remove the tree from the body, knowing how useless that would be. But after the moose had bled freely, with his sharp knife he laid back a portion of the skin and cut off several slices of the warm, quivering flesh. This took him but a few minutes, and he then made his way back to his companions, his heart overflowing with joy and thankfulness.

This unexpected help in time of extremity seemed to Marion nothing else than providential.

"I was always interested in that story of Elijah in the wilderness," she remarked as she watched the ser-

geant broiling the meat over several hot coals. "Although I never really doubted that the Lord sent those ravens to feed him, yet in some way it always appeared to me like a fairy tale. But now I know that He does care, and will supply our needs."

"I guess you're right, Miss Brisbane," Rolfe agreed, as he squatted before the fire. "From the way we have been helped it does look reasonable. Now, if ravens, or some other birds would come along and leave us a little salt to season that meat, and a few loaves of bread, it would add a great finishing touch to the whole affair."

"You are too moderate in your wish," Marion smilingly replied. "Why don't you wish for a roast turkey, with all the fixings, and a big plum-pudding while you are about it?"

"Yes, and oranges, pears, cigars, and such things," North retorted. "That's the trouble with you, Tom, you're never satisfied. Anyway, there's nothing but this meat for breakfast without any fixings, so you've got to make the most of it."

An hour later the three of them started to bring in a supply of moose meat. Marion, who was now fully recovered, was determined to go, too, and she enjoyed the tramp. When she saw the huge mass of snow and tangled trees she gave a cry of amazement. But when she beheld the body of the moose, her face became very pale.

"Isn't it terrible!" she gasped. "I thought I was accustomed to horrible sights, seeing so many in the hospitals, but this is somehow different. How that poor animal must have struggled to free itself. Nature can be so gentle and beautiful at times, and again so stern and merciless."

"I hate it all," North replied as he drew forth his knife, and set to work upon the moose. "Nature, as you call it, is always upsetting one's plans. Look what a mess it has got us into here."

"Master Tennyson said," Rolfe reminded,

"I curse not nature, no, nor death,
For nothing is that errs from law."

"Poetry again!" the sergeant growled. "I thought you were completely cured. Well, I guess Master Tennyson would have done some cursing if he had lived in a country such as this. Here, hold back this leg while I strip off the hide."

Marion watched the men until their task was completed. They then returned to their camping-place, carrying with them the skin of the moose, and large pieces of meat. The fire was replenished, and the three sat down to rest.

"We must get to The Gap as soon as possible," the sergeant began. "And to do so, we need snow-shoes. Tom, you get to work and cut up that skin into long strips as narrow as you can. I am going to look for some suitable wood. We shall have to manufacture our own outfit."

"What! make snow-shoes?" the constable asked in surprise.

"Certainly. They will be clumsy affairs, I admit, but they will serve our purpose. Haven't I told you how I made a pair years ago when my dogs made a meal of the sinews?"

"But you had the frames left, sergeant."

"That's true. But as I haven't frames now, I am going to make them. I wish to goodness I had an axe. It is difficult to do anything with nothing but a

knife. Anyway, it can't be helped, so I must make the best of it."

The sergeant was gone for over half an hour, and when he returned he was carrying with him a bundle of stout withes, consisting of alders and birch limbs. These he threw down near the fire and held his hands close to the genial heat. He looked at Marion, who was sitting upon the fir boughs, holding one end of a strip of the moose hide which the constable was carefully slicing. She was interested in her work, glad to be of some use. North thought that he never saw her look more beautiful, and when she lifted her head and saw the expression of admiration in the sergeant's eyes, her cheeks took on a richer hue.

"This life certainly agrees with you," he remarked. "You don't seem to mind the cold."

"Not while I have something to do," was the reply. "I am glad to be able to help a little."

North lost no time, but began at once making the frames for the snow-shoes. He worked with feverish haste, for every minute was precious. When Marion was not busy helping with the cutting of the skin, she sat watching him as he peeled the sticks, bent each into the proper shape, fastened the two ends together, set in the cross-bars, and lashed them securely to the frame. The weaving of the web was a more difficult task, but the sergeant showed Marion how it should be done, and she proved an apt pupil.

"You are to weave your own," he informed her, "while Tom and I do ours. Let us see who will be done first."

Then the friendly rivalry began, which was only interrupted as they rested, prepared, and ate some more broiled moose meat. This simple repast ended, they

continued their work. Marion was the first to finish, and triumphantly she held up her snow-shoes for inspection. They were but poor clumsy affairs, yet they were to serve as means of deliverance.

Although contending with many difficulties, there was never one word of complaint uttered. The cold was intense, which even the fire could not overcome. Huddled as close as possible to the heat, their faces would be hot while their backs were chilled. No blankets had they to wrap about their bodies. Fir boughs were their only protection, and an abundance of these the men banked up around Marion, and then made a shelter for themselves on the opposite side of the fire. That night while the sergeant worked constructing a little rude toboggan out of a number of sticks and a portion of the frozen moose skin, Rolfe repeated numerous poems, to which Marion listened with much interest. Piece after piece he recited, grave, stirring and gay.

"Poetry has always been my reserve power," he explained. "When I get downhearted, or in a tight place, a noble poem stirs me like martial music. There are two, especially, which have never failed me yet. The first is Newbolt's 'Play up, play up, and play the game.' The other is Henley's masterpiece, 'The Captain.' No doubt you know it, Miss Brisbane, but just listen to these words:

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods there be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Beneath the bludgeonings of fate,
My head is bloody, but unbowed."

"Now, wouldn't that stir the most discouraged? Doesn't it arouse one, make him stand up, face defeat, fight, and win? That is what it has done to me over and over again. Now, just listen to this last verse:

" 'It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the Captain of my soul.' "

Upon Rolfe's face was an expression of great determination as he ended, and his glowing eyes were looking straight before him. To him the words were wonderfully real and effective. Marion, too, felt their spell, and even the heart of the matter-of-fact sergeant experienced a strange thrill.

"Tom, I never appreciated your poetry before," the latter candidly confessed. "To me it was all doggerel, but I see it in a different light now. I am really glad to see that you have broken out again after your unusually long silence."

The constable's face beamed with pleasure, and he gave a sigh of relief.

"Good for you, sergeant!" he replied. "Now you can understand why General Wolfe recited Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' as he moved up the river to attack Quebec. We have often argued about that, and you always contended it was all nonsense. I am glad that you see light at last."

CHAPTER 15

The Truce of the Storm

UNDER the most favourable circumstances a northern trail in the dead winter is a test of endurance. There is the stinging cold, the weary tread hour after hour, up hill and down, with no prospect of a hot supper waiting at the end of the day's march. It is hard and discouraging enough then, but how much more difficult when the snow-shoes are merely rough, heavy makeshifts, the webs too loose to support the feet in a proper manner, and the frames occasionally giving way beneath the strain. In addition to all this and the weariness, to have little to eat, and no comfortable resting place at night.

Such were the conditions under which the three wayfarers plodded slowly onward the next day. North and Rolfe found it hard, but Marion a great deal harder. The snow-shoes which had caused her so much pride seemed like great clogs to her feet. She longed to throw them aside; but that was out of the question. So wearily she struggled forward, doing her best to keep up with the men, who were even then travelling at a snail's pace for her sake. The sergeant longed to help her, but as they were moving in Indian file he could do little to assist. Several times he tried to walk by her side, holding her arm and letting her lean on him for support. But the snow was too deep, and each time he floundered around on his wretched snow-

shoes, and was always glad to get back on the trail again.

That day they were able to make only a few miles, and camped early, greatly fatigued. Once more little brush shelters were made, their meat supper eaten, after which they gathered close to the fire for warmth. The sergeant was anxious about Marion. She looked more weary than he had ever seen her before. But she assured him that she was feeling fine, only tired, that was all. In the morning she would be once more ready for the trail.

"I have been trying Mr. Rolfe's plan all day," she said, "and have been repeating verses which I learned years ago, especially old familiar hymns. It was certainly a great help. I thought of what the Bishop of the Yukon once told me. You remember how he and another man nearly lost their lives in crossing the mountains from Fort McPherson. When they were in terrible straits, not knowing where they were, worn to shadows, and forced to eat their muck-lucks to keep life in their bodies, the Bishop was greatly encouraged by the words of the hymn 'Go labour on, spend and be spent.' You can add the Bishop's testimony and mine, Mr. Rolfe, to support your claim of the influence of poetry."

"Indeed I shall, Miss Brisbane," the constable declared. "When I go outside, if I ever live to get there, I am going to give a lecture on the influence of poetry. As examples, I shall relate the experiences of you, the Bishop, and General Wolfe, as well as my own."

"What about you, John?" Marion asked, turning to the sergeant, who was seated by her side. "Haven't you something to add to such imposing witnesses?"

"I am afraid not," was the quiet reply. "The only

poetry I ever learned was 'God save the King,' and but one verse of that."

"Ugh! that isn't poetry, sergeant," Rolfe retorted. "That's nothing but doggerel."

"It may be as you say, Tom, but there's something in it, for all that, which stirs the heart. The singing of that kept the spirit of loyalty alive in this country, and sent hundreds of thousands of men overseas during the Great War. It sent me, anyway, and brought me back again to the north to serve the King when the war was over. You may read and quote poetry all you like, Tom, but the finest poetry, to my way of thinking, is found in worthy deeds of service. I can't sing a note of the National Anthem, and yet, perhaps, my work up here in trying to carry out true British justice is worth something. I hope so, at any rate."

The constable was surprised at this outburst, for the sergeant was a man of few words. He made no comment, however, but rose to his feet and piled more wood upon the fire. What his thoughts were, he kept to himself as he sat and watched the leaping flames and the sparks dancing and circling up into the darkness. Marion and North sat upon the opposite side near each other. Occasionally he glanced toward them as they conversed together in low tones. A longing was entering his own heart for the love and confidence of such a woman as Marion Brisbane. Hitherto, he had thought little about it, being content with his wandering life. But now he felt indescribably lonely. He seized a stick and stirred the fire, which did not at all need stirring. Then his pent-up feelings had to be given expression. He again rose to his feet, and looking over at his companions began:

"'Tis sweet to hear the watch-dogs' honest bark
Bay deep-mouthed welcome as we draw near home,
'Tis sweet to know an eye will mark our coming,
And grow brighter when we come."

"Getting sentimental, Tom, eh?" the sergeant queried.

"Why shouldn't I?" was the retort. "It's catching, I guess."

The night was a hard one. The men took turns keeping the fire going, but they slept little, owing to the cold. Marion determined to take her share in watching, and the men did not oppose her wish. But when at last, through extreme weariness, she did fall asleep, North and Rolfe took off their short heavy coats, and laid them over her body, the same as they had done the night before. Upon waking, she had chided them for doing such a thing, and told them that they must not again run any risk for her sake. The men had merely smiled, and remained silent.

In the morning Marion felt very stiff and sore from the unaccustomed exertions of the previous day. She said nothing, however, as they started once more upon the trail. But she could not deceive the sergeant, and he felt greatly worried. He knew that she could not travel far that day, only a few miles at the most. Something had to be done, and he turned over in his mind the best course to pursue. For a time he could not decide, but when Rolfe began to limp painfully, owing to an attack of snow-shoe cramp, he hesitated no longer.

"Look here," he began, "we shall never reach The Gap at the pace we are going, and now that Tom is knocked out, matters are worse than ever. You two must camp here while I go for assistance. I can reach

140 The Trail of the Golden Horn

The Gap before night, round up a team of dogs and come back early to-morrow."

Marion's face turned pale at the suggestion, although she said nothing. Rolfe knew that the sergeant was right, although he felt badly at being forced to give up.

"Farewell! a long farewell to all my greatness!" he quoted.

"This is the state of man—"

"Never mind about your greatness," the sergeant interrupted. "We know all about that, and also your state at the present time. Get to work at once and build as good a shelter as you can. There's a fine clump of trees right over there," and he motioned to the left. "I'm sorry I can't help you."

He then turned to Marion, who was standing silently near.

"Tom will look after you," he told her. "Except for his poetry, he is all right. He needs to be brought back to earth occasionally, that's all."

He then stooped and kissed her. For a few seconds she clung to him, and there were tears in her eyes.

"Take care of yourself, John," she said, "I am sorry to give you so much trouble. But for me, you both would be at The Gap by this time. But, there, I must not detain you any longer."

Hour after hour North moved on his way, up hill and down, through thick woods and across barren regions. He was greatly hampered by his miserable snow-shoes. They lacked the spring and buoyancy of the ones he had lost. Often they clogged with snow, and he could not tell at what minute they might go to pieces. He was forced to use the greatest care as he well knew how much depended upon his getting to The Gap for

assistance. Should anything happen to him, then Marion and the constable would both perish.

For some time he had been anxiously watching the sky, which was a dull leaden color. He knew that a storm was not far away, and already the wind was wailing among the trees. He hoped to outrace it, and if he could cross a bad desolate tract of burnt land which he knew was ahead before the tempest burst, he would feel quite secure. A storm in the mountains was a thing to be dreaded. The weather had been fine of late, exceptionally so, but he knew that it could not continue. The storm was overdue, and when it did come, it was likely to be a most furious one.

Ere long fine particles of snow filled the air, and flecked his body. They soon grew thicker, and by the time he had reached the edge of the burnt region the storm was most menacing. He looked anxiously out into the open where the snow, driven by the now unimpeded wind, resembled the levelled lances of thousands of mystic legions of the north. To go back he must not. His only course was forward, with the hope that he might reach the opposite side before the trail became completely obliterated.

Removing a mass of snow from his snow-shoes, and drawing his cap more firmly about his face, North left the shelter of the forest and plunged out into the driving storm. With head bent, and eyes fixed upon the rapidly disappearing trail, he pressed steadily forward. It was a hard struggle, and the cold was intense, piercing his body. At length his progress became slower. His feet would slip provokingly off the snow-shoes, and at times he found himself floundering around in the deep snow, and only regaining the trail with considerable difficulty. Often, too, he was forced to pause

for breath, and to beat his hands together in order to get some warmth into his numbed fingers. He realised the seriousness of his situation, but he was determined not to give up. He must reach the forest beyond. Marion's life depended upon his efforts, and he must not fail her. Again he struggled back upon the trail from which he had wandered. Once more he peered keenly ahead, hoping to catch sight of the friendly trees. But everything was blotted from view, and his eyes ached from the lashing of the cruel snow.

At length he felt that he could go no farther. He was becoming bewildered. The roar of the wind sounded like a demon hurling itself upon him. He groped for the trail like a blind man. He was almost waist-deep in the snow, and the snow-shoes were off his feet. His body was becoming numb. But he would not give up. He would fight the monster, and win out. With another frantic effort he threw himself forward, his hands reaching out. Then he lifted up his voice in one great cry of despair, the first that had ever come from his lips in all his years of service in the Force.

And as he stood there, his face turned appealingly toward the forest, the form of a man bending to the wind suddenly hove in sight. So unexpected was this appearance that the sergeant gave a gasp of surprise. The man seemed more than human as he advanced with long strides. The storm whipping his great body appeared not to impede him in the least. He was about to pass when North hailed him.

"Help! help!" he cried.

The traveller stopped short, swung quickly around, rubbed the snow from his eyes, and peered keenly in the direction from which the sound had come. In-

stantly North recognised Hugo, the trapper, and unconsciously his numbed right hand groped for his revolver. Hugo, too, recognised the sergeant, and noticing the movement of his hand, he gave a roar of warning.

"Drop that," he ordered. "Heavens! man, are you crazy? This is no time or place to pull a gun. What could you do against me? I guess you'd better wait. What's wrong, anyway?"

"I'm all in," was the reply.

"H'm, you look it," Hugo growled, as he stepped closer. "All in but your spirit, eh? Man, I like your pluck. Here, take my hand, and I'll lift you out of that hole."

In another minute North was standing upon the trail, and then the two men faced each other. The wind swirled the snow in furious gusts about their bodies, at times almost hiding each other from view. North was the first to speak.

"You are my prisoner," he said. "I order you to surrender."

Hugo's only reply was to throw back his head, and emit a roar of laughter.

"Do you think I am joking?" the sergeant sternly asked. "I am on duty, remember, so your best plan is to obey."

"Surrender! what am I to surrender, man? I'm here, but what are you going to do with me? From all appearances you had better surrender to me, and let me get you out of this. Let us stop this fooling and settle down to business."

"And you won't fight?" North asked in surprise.

Hugo reached out, laid a heavy hand upon the sergeant's shoulder, and shook him.

"Wake up," he ordered. "What's the matter with you? Do you realize where you are? Fight! I'm not going to fight a half-crazed man."

The rough shake and the plain words brought North to his senses. He looked around for an instant, and then his eyes sought his rescuer's face.

"Forgive me," he said. "But I guess I have been a little off my base. And no wonder. I've been in hell."

"True to your orders, for all that, eh?" Hugo queried. "Lost, half frozen, daft, and yet hanging on like a bulldog. Lord! is it any wonder that the Force is what it is when it contains men like you? But tell me, where is my daughter?"

"Marion?"

"Yes."

"Back there with Constable Rolfe. I was on my way to The Gap for aid when this storm knocked me out. Will you help me?"

"Is it a truce, then?" Hugo asked.

"A truce to what?"

"To our enmity. We are enemies, so it seems. But we must be friends for a time to save my daughter."

"Yes, and to save the girl I love, and who has promised to be my wife," the sergeant replied.

Hugo's face darkened and a terrible temptation smote his heart. It was only for an instant, however, and then reaching out, he seized North's mittened hand.

"It is well," he simply said. "Let it be the truce of the storm."

CHAPTER 16

The Man of the Gap

"**T**HE GAP" is a natural opening between the Yukon River region on the east and the great mountains on the west. In fact, it is the one door through which people pass, Indians and whites alike, on mining, trading, or any other business. In former days native warriors passed this way to wage war upon some distant tribe. It was a regular Thermopylæ where a few men could hold an entire army at bay. Two huge shoulders of rocks, devoid of any vegetation, oppose each other. Through The Gap flows a little stream, draining a lake miles away. By the side of this runs the trail, worn deep by the tread of many feet, not only of human beings, but of moose, deer, bear, and other animals of the north. Just within The Gap on the Eastward side is a remarkable valley, several acres in extent, scooped, so it seems, out of the mountains. This is completely sheltered from every wind which blows, and had always formed a favorite camping-ground for Indians. It is a most desirable place, for apart from the shelter it affords from storms and enemies, mountain sheep and other game are abundant, while the little stream and various lakes teem with fish, especially the King Salmon.

It was, therefore, but natural that Charles Norris, a clergyman sent out by a great English Missionary Society, should choose this spot as the strategic point

in his work among the Indians. For long years he and his faithful wife laboured among the tribes of the wandering foot. They won them from heathen ways, and the influence of the Medicine Men. A log church was built, and in due time a school for the children. A linguist of no mean ability, Mr. Norris learned the native tongue, and gave the Indians hymns, prayers, and portions of Scripture in their own language. It was a happy community, uncontaminated by any of the degenerating influences of so-called civilisation. When the Indians returned from the hills, the church and mission house were always filled with earnest seekers after the truth, and the hearts of the missionaries overflowed with thankfulness to Him who had wrought such wonders through their humble efforts.

Often they would look upon the great mountains, and in their majesty and surrounding strength they would see the encompassing arms of the Almighty. To them The Gap Mission was what Jerusalem was to the people of Hebrew days. Their eyes would kindle and their hearts thrill as they dwelt upon the words of the ancient poet:

“As the mountains are about Jerusalem,
So the Lord is round about His people.”

Hardly a morning passed that Charles Norris did not stand at the door of his house and say, either silently or aloud:

“‘I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
From whence cometh my help.’”

It was a great day for the missionaries and Indians alike when the first copies containing hymns, prayers,

and portions of Scripture reached them from England. Already there were leaders trained to read, and these small books were carried by the natives to their hunting-grounds. There night after night, where the two or three gathered together, the leader would read the wonderful words contained in the little manual. He would then repeat a number of prayers, and all would join in singing some favourite hymn. To the missionaries it seemed as if the Pentecostal fire had really come down upon those lost sheep of the Rocky Mountains.

But alas! great changes ere long took place. This happy state of affairs was not destined to endure. As the serpent entered the Garden of Eden and destroyed its peaceful repose, so it was at The Gap. With the discovery of gold, thousands of men poured into the country. They traversed every trail, followed up every valley in their mad rush for wealth. Although many of the newcomers were good men, who respected the law of God and man, there were others, the scum of civilisation, who polluted everything and place they touched. Little by little they led away the Indians from their allegiance to what they had been taught. For a time the natives resisted, but their thirst for hootch, and the temptations the white men set before them, proved too strong. Sadly Charles Norris and his wife saw their influence wane, and their work of years brought to ruin. They pleaded, they prayed, but all in vain. At last the day came when only two were left—an old leader, Tom, and his faithful wife, Kate. Nothing could divert their loyalty to the missionaries, and they, too, grieved over the defection of the members of their tribe.

It was a trying time when the mission school had to

be given up. The children slipped away, one by one, a number of the girls being led astray by white men. The loss of Zell affected them keenly. They had hoped much from this girl, who was brighter than the others, and possessed of nobler qualities. They had made much of her, and she was to them almost like a daughter.

But the greatest blow of all to Charles Norris was when his wife sickened and died. For a time he was completely bewildered. He laid her to rest in the little Indian burying place nearby, and once again took up his weary and lonely task. Nothing could induce him to leave his post of duty. His Bishop came, pleaded, and reasoned with him, but to no purpose.

"My place is here," he had quietly replied. "The Indians may come back, and when they do, I must be waiting to receive them. I have no other home, and the interests of the outside world are nothing to me."

And so he remained, living alone in his house, attended by Kate, the Indian woman. She washed and cooked for him, and did what she could for his welfare. His wants were few, his mind now being entirely occupied with earnest prayers on behalf of his wandering flock, and preparing a larger manual of worship for the natives.

"They may need it some day," he had told his Bishop. "I have spent many years in studying the language, and it may be a help to others when I am gone. I feel sure that the Lord will not let all my work come to naught."

So great were his hope and faith, that every evening, both summer and winter, he held the simple service in the log church. Exactly at seven o'clock he would ring the little bell, which was fastened to a rude frame

near the door. When the sound had ceased he would look up the valley, and listen intently for the music of hurrying feet which no longer came as in the past. Only Tom and Kate would come, shuffling along, to take their places near the chancel steps. The missionary would then enter the little vestry, don his robes, and read the service, never forgetting to pray for the absent ones.

One cold night after service the missionary returned to his lonely house. Lighting a candle, he stirred up the fire in the sheet-iron heater, and added a couple of sticks. He then sat down at the rough deal table nearby which contained a number of books, several sheets of paper, pen, and ink. His eyes rested upon his translation of the beautiful benediction of St. Paul in his second letter to the Church at Corinth. "Nyiwhet Kekwadhut Jesus Kreist vit chekoorzi ako Vittekwichanchyo chettigwinidhun, ako Chunkyo Rsotitinyoo nichya sheg Myiwhot tutthug zyunkoli. Amen." Carefully he compared this with the English, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen." For some time he sat there pondering over these words. He had no doubt about their truth, but somehow it did seem as if they were not applicable to him and his scattered flock. Grace had been strangely withheld of late, love had grown cold, and the bond of fellowship broken. The enemies of righteousness had triumphed, and truth had been trampled under foot. He and his two faithful Indians were alone left to uphold the standard of the Lord in that desolate wilderness. Was it really any use for him to strive longer? Perhaps it might be better for him to go elsewhere.

Surely there was other work for him to do. Was he only wasting his time by remaining at The Gap?

Suddenly there flashed into his mind the lament of the Lord, "I sought for a man that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, and I found none." These words startled him, and he quickly turned to the twenty-second chapter of the prophet Ezekiel. He read them with kindling eyes, and his heart beating a little faster. Why had they come to him just then? Was it a message from on high? A warning for him not to leave his post of duty? Did the Lord mean for him to remain there? Was there something yet for him to do? Yes, he would stay, and when the time came that a man was specially needed, he, Charles Norris, would be found standing in The Gap. This resolve gave him considerable comfort, so once more he picked up his pen and went on with his work.

For perhaps an hour he sat there, lost in his self-imposed task of translating the clear brief English words into the long, forbidding ones of the native language. He was at length aroused by a loud knock upon the door. He started, and looked around. At once the door opened and a man entered, who stood gazing for a few seconds at the scene before him.

"I want shelter for the night," he roughly said. "An' grub, too. I'm starving."

He then moved toward the stove, and the missionary noticed that he limped painfully.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, rising from his seat and stepping forward.

The visitor was about to make a savage reply, when he suddenly stopped. Something about the old man restrained him. He could not tell what it was, but

Bill, the Slugger, for once was abashed. He put up his right hand as if to keep the missionary back. The latter interpreted this motion as a sign of faintness.

"Come, come, sit right down here," he said, drawing up a chair to the fire. "I shall give you something to eat at once, and make you a cup of strong tea."

With a groan Bill slumped into the chair, and when food was brought, he ate ravenously. He gulped down the tea, and handed back his cup for more.

"Say, ye don't happen to have somethin' with a kick in it, do ye?" he asked.

"You mean hootch, I suppose," and a sad expression overspread the missionary's face. "No, I have no use for the stuff."

"It's good enough, though, when it has the right kick," the visitor mournfully replied.

"It had the wrong kick among my flock, and ruined my work here."

"Did it? That's too bad." Bill was feeling in a better humour now.

"An' so ye lost 'em all, eh?"

"All but two; old Tom and his wife."

"Religion doesn't take much hold on Injuns, so I've heard. Ye'll give up yer job now, I s'pose. Much in it, eh?"

"In what way?"

"Oh, in money. D'ye git much fer hangin' out here? It's a wonder ye don't leave."

"All I have in this world is here," was the quiet reply. "My total earthly possessions are under this roof, and out among the trees, a short distance from the building."

"What! a cache?"

"No—my wife's grave."

This unexpected reply startled Bill, and he gasped, knowing not what to say. His movement caused him to groan with pain, and only with difficulty he smothered an angry oath.

"Is there anything I can do for your leg?" the missionary asked. "I am quite a doctor, so might be able to help you."

"Yes, it's bad," Bill acknowledged. "Hurt it on the trail. Look." When the left bare leg was exposed, Norris beheld a nasty swelling, just above the ankle.

"It looks like a sprain," the missionary remarked, examining it closely. "Hot applications and iodine will give you relief."

The visitor made no comment but let the missionary wait upon him. Hot cloths were then applied, after which the swollen part was well painted with iodine.

"There, I guess that will do for the present," Norris said, as he rose from his knees, corked the bottle and placed it upon a shelf.

"A rest will do you good. You may sleep in that little room over there. You will find it quite warm."

"I'd rather sit here fer a while," Bill replied. "Ye don't mind if I smoke, do ye?"

"Not in the least. The Indians always smoked when they came to see me. Have you any tobacco?"

"No, I haven't. Say, ye don't happen to have any, do ye?"

"Yes, there is part of a plug which old Tom left the other day. He won't mind you having it."

Bill eagerly seized the tobacco, quickly whittled off several slices, and filled his blackened pipe. With a sigh of contentment, he leaned back in the chair.

"My! that's good," he said. "I've been sufferin' fer days fer a smoke."

"Well, enjoy yourself, then, while I do some work," Norris replied. "We can talk later."

Seated once more at the table, the missionary was soon engrossed in his work. The visitor watched him curiously as he sent big wreathes of smoke into the air. And truly it was a scene worthy of a great artist—the venerable, white-haired man, with the long flowing beard, noble forehead, and eyes expressive of sympathy and devotion. The lighted candle, and the humble surroundings seemed to enhance the face and form of the man, bestowing upon him a patriarchal dignity, and the glorifying of the commonplace.

Of all this, however, the silent man near the stove thought nothing. His mind was dwelling upon more material things, such as the amount of money the missionary might have on his person or concealed about the house, and whether it would be worth the trouble and the risk to knock him on the head in order to find out. He wondered if he would fight if ordered to produce anything of value. He believed that he could handle him all right, and that he would easily submit when threatened by a revolver. But of the old man's eyes he was not so sure. There was something about them that made him afraid, and awed even his reckless and villainous nature. No respect for the self-denying and gentle man of God entered his calloused heart. And gratitude for favors received, which even the dumb brutes possess, was to him a thing unknown.

At length the missionary laid down his pen and looked over at his visitor.

"You must be very tired," he said. "It is my bedtime, so if you will excuse me, I shall retire. Make yourself perfectly at home here, and if you need any

help in the night with your ankle, call me. But, as is always my custom, I shall have a few prayers.

At once the old man kneeled down and offered up his humble petitions. He prayed especially for the wandering flock, not forgetting to ask a blessing upon the stranger under his roof. Thanking God for all His past mercies, and committing himself and his visitor to the Divine protection, he rose from his knees and picked up his candle.

When the missionary began to pray, a cynical and a mocking expression overspread Bill's face. With unbent head he watched the "daft old man," as he considered him. But as the praying continued, some chord of memory was touched, and for the first time in years he recalled the little prayer he had learned at his mother's knees. It was merely a passing emotion, however, but it brought a softer expression into his eyes.

"Are there any Injuns near here?" he asked, as the missionary was about to leave the room.

"Yes, several bands are out in the hills, so I understand."

"Where?"

"Due west, straight up the valley. Good night, and may you rest well."

CHAPTER 17

The Trapper Arrives

CHARLES NORRIS was an early riser, and it was his custom to be at work hours before the sun stole down into the valley. But the next morning he departed from this habit of years, and remained in bed longer than usual. He did not wish to disturb his guest, for, judging by what he had heard in the night, he believed that his rest had been broken owing to the pain in his leg, and so was forced to move around a great deal. Once he had asked if he could do anything for him, and had been told that nothing could be done. After that the missionary had gone to sleep again, and did not awake until his usual time.

When at length he did get up and dress, he walked softly out into the other room. He made as little noise as possible in placing several sticks in the stove, and even postponed his breakfast. He sat down at the table and busied himself for a while with his translation work. At last he arose and went over to the corner of the room where he kept his supply of food. Finding nothing there, he was surprised. He went back for his candle and made a thorough examination of the corner. But not a scrap of meat, bread, or flour, was left. All was gone. Somewhat dazed, the missionary wondered what could have happened to his provisions. Then an idea came to his mind which caused him some uneasiness. Walking rapidly

to the room where he believed his guest had slept, he held the candle above his head and looked in. But no sign of the visitor could he see. In fact, the bed had not been slept in at all. Then he knew for a certainty that the man had gone, and taken with him the scanty supply of food the house contained.

"My, oh, my! I am surprised!" the missionary murmured. "He need not have stolen that food, as I would gladly have given it to him. Why did he commit that sin?"

Charles Norris was of such a trustful disposition that it was hard for him to see evil in anyone. So gentle was he that his gentleness became a weakness when dealing with the stern facts of life. Had his nature been moulded along more rugged lines he would have succeeded better with his Indians. They considered his gentleness and patience as a weakness in his make-up, and always imposed upon him, even when most amenable to his teaching. Perhaps if he had been more severe, and mingled with his gentleness some of the manly fibre of the Great Master, it might have been better. But that he could not do. He would win through gentle love alone, and in no other way, forgetting in his holy enthusiasm that the truest love is at times closely linked with the chastening rod. He knew that there was much evil in the world, but he believed that the overmastering weapon to conquer it was love. He trusted his unknown visitor that night, and when he found that he had wilfully deceived him it was a severe shock.

Returning to the table, he sat down, and remained for some time lost in thought. At length he turned and looked toward a little box upon the shelf where a small clock was ticking. He rose to his feet, went over,

took down the box, opened it and peered in. It was empty! He had not left much money there, but it was all that he had.

"So he took that!" he exclaimed. "I can understand his stealing food. But my money! The Indians, even when most uncouth, never stole anything from this house. And to think that a white man, and one I trusted, should be the first to steal from me!"

The missionary was standing near the shelf, when a gentle tap sounded upon the door, and old Tom at once entered.

"Good morning, Gikhi," he accosted in the native tongue. "You are alone, I see."

"And why shouldn't I be, Tom?" the missionary asked. "Am I not generally alone?"

"Yes, but not last night. Where is the stranger?"

"Did you see him?"

"Tom saw him. Does Gikhi know who he is, and where he came from?"

"No; I never asked him."

"Bad white man, ugh!"

"How do you know that, Tom?"

"Tom old man now. Tom knows much. Tom sees here," and he touched his eyes with the fingers of his right hand. He then placed his hand to his forehead. "Tom sees more here," he added, while a quaint smile overspread his face. "White man steal grub, eh?" and he looked over toward the corner of the room.

"Why, yes! How did you know that?"

"Tom get Gikhi grub now," was the native's reply.

"I can't pay you, Tom. The white man took my money."

"Tom doesn't want pay. Tom glad to give grub. Gikhi good man."

"Thank you, Tom. You are a true friend. I shall not forget this."

When Tom had gone the missionary returned to his seat by the table. He did not pick up his pen as usual, but sat staring straight before him. Tom's presence had brought back memories of other days when morning by morning Indians had come to his house on various missions, and they had always received a hearty welcome. They needed him then, but he needed them now. This was a new and startling idea. He wondered why he had never thought of it before. Had he done too much for the Indians, and had not allowed them to do enough for him? "Service for others" had always been his motto, and he had given of himself without stint. And the sense of responsibility, and of giving without receiving, had been an unspeakable joy. But had he thus taught the natives? Sadly he was forced to confess to himself that he had not. He had presented to them a distorted view of the life and teaching of the Great Master. Their characters, accordingly, had not been developed, and in the time of temptation they had fallen away.

"Forgive me, Lord! forgive me!" he murmured. "I did it unwittingly. I am not worthy to be called Thy servant. But now my eyes are opened and I see. Lord, give me another chance. Cast me not away in my old age, until I show to Thy wandering ones the true glory of loving and unselfish service."

He ceased, and his grey eyes glowed anew with the light of a great resolve. Charles Norris, the missionary, had made a wonderful discovery. It came to him in a moment of time, but it had taken long years of toil and hardship, of sorrow and failure, to bring it to pass.

He was aroused from his reverie by a heavy knock

upon the door. Ere he could rise, the door was thrust open, and Hugo, the trapper, entered, bearing in his arms the limp form of Zell, the half-breed girl. Hugo staggered as he started to cross the floor, and he would have dropped the girl had not the missionary stepped quickly forward and caught her in his arms. He then carried her over and laid her upon a little cot near the stove. Hugo followed him, and looked down anxiously upon the unconscious one.

"I made it!" he gasped. "Lord! I thought I'd never do it!"

"Who is the girl?" the missionary asked. "What has happened to her?"

Hugo made no reply, but sat down wearily upon the nearest seat, which was nothing but a rough bench. His face was drawn and haggard, expressing more plainly than words the great struggle he had made. The missionary wisely forbore questioning further, but turned at once and prepared a cup of tea.

"This is all I have to offer you, now," he apologised, handing Hugo a steaming cup. "I had a visitor last night, and he took nearly everything but this."

Hugo drank the tea, and giving back the cup, stretched out his hands toward the stove.

"My! that heat feels good," he said. "That poor girl must be chilled through; I kept her as warm as I could, but it was a hard job."

Going at once into his bedroom, the missionary brought out a thick blanket and laid it carefully over the girl's body.

"What is the matter with her?" he asked, turning to the trapper.

"She's crazy, that's what's wrong. I found her wan-

dering around in the snow, singing and making queer noises, and so I brought her here."

"But what happened to her? How did she come to be wandering about alone?"

"It was due to a devil who calls himself a man," Hugo savagely replied. "I'm just longing to get my hands on that skunk, and I'll—"

Hugo paused without finishing his sentence, and the doubled-up first of his right hand shot straight before him. There was no doubt about what he would do should he come across the man responsible for Zell's condition.

Just then Tom entered, and laid a supply of food upon the table. He looked first at Hugo, whom he well knew, and then at the covered form on the cot. Indian like, he made no comment, but drew the missionary's attention to the food.

"Never mind that now, Tom," Mr. Norris replied. "Go and bring Kate here at once. I want her to look after the girl over there. I don't know what to do for her. She should have a woman's care, anyway."

"Is the white girl very sick, Gikhi?"

"I am afraid so. She has had a hard time on the trail, and her head is queer."

Tom at once left the building, and in a remarkably short time he was back again with his wife close at his heels. The latter, a stout, motherly-looking woman, went at once to the side of the cot. She turned back the blanket, and when she had drawn aside the hood which almost concealed the girl's face, she uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What's the matter, Kate?" the missionary asked, hurrying to her side.

The Indian woman made no reply, but pointed ex-

citedly at the girl. Owing to the dimness of the room, and failing sight, Mr. Norris bent down over the cot and peered at the girl's face. Then a great cry of concern broke from his lips, and dropping upon his knees he reached out trembling hands.

"It's Zell; it's Zell!" he exclaimed. "It's our own lost child come back again! Quick, Kate, remove her hood and let me have a good look at her. Light the candle, Tom, and bring it here."

When his orders had been speedily obeyed, he took the candle in his left hand, and held it so that the light would shine upon the girl's face. Catching one of Zell's limp, cold hands in his, he felt her pulse.

"No, she is not dead, thank God. But she needs help at once. You will take good care of her, Kate."

"Ah, ah, Gikhi, Kate will look well after the girl," was the quiet reply. "Tom will carry her to our cabin."

"No, no, she must stay here," the missionary insisted. "She has come back home, and this is the place for her. My wife, were she alive, would want our child to remain here."

"She is not with us now, Gikhi, remember," Tom replied. "Kate knows what to do for Zell better than white men."

"You are right, Tom," the missionary agreed. "Zell shall go with Kate. She is the proper one to look after her."

"Good, good," Tom replied, as he stooped and lifted the girl in his arms. In another minute he was out of the house, with Kate following close at his heels.

The missionary stood watching them until they passed within their own abode. He then closed the door and came over to Hugo's side.

"You are tired," he said. "Let me get you some-

thing to eat, and after that you must have a good sleep."

The trapper looked up wearily into the old man's face. The missionary's interest and sympathy touched him deeply. For the time, he was no longer the great strong Hugo of the trail, a modern Esau, with his heart against every man, except the unfortunate. He was as a child, tired out, ready to rest.

After Hugo had eaten the simple meal, the missionary conducted him to the room where he had taken Bill, the Slugger, the night before.

"There is a good bed," he told him. "It has not been slept on for some time. The man who stayed here last night was suffering too much to sleep. He left before I was up."

"Who was that?" Hugo asked.

"I do not know his name. But he had a bad leg, which he said he injured on the trail. I did what I could for him, but it gave him no relief. Anyway, he was able to travel and carry with him my entire stock of provisions, and all the money I had."

"What! did he steal them?" Hugo asked in surprise.

"Yes, but, then, perhaps, he needed them more than I did. If he had only asked me, I would gladly have given him food, and money, too, for that matter."

Hugo was about to question further, but refrained, and stretched himself out upon the bed. Carefully and almost tenderly the missionary covered him with thick blankets, closed the door and went back to his table and writing.

All through the day the trapper slept, and was only aroused by the sound of the bell outside. Wondering what it could mean, he quickly rose, went to the door and looked out. Then he understood, so closing the

door he walked over to the little church. The bell was silent now, for the ringer had already gone into the building. Hugo also entered and sat down on a seat near the door. Old Tom was alone, sitting in his accustomed place. Presently the missionary came from the vestry and began the service. Although Hugo could not understand a word that was being said, he was much impressed. The church was cold, and dimly lighted by two candles. The missionary's voice was intensely earnest, and a feeling of great respect came into the trapper's heart as he listened. What wonderful faith the man must have, he mused. How other men would have given up long ago.

And as he watched, he gave a sudden start. A strange light seemed to surround the two worshippers. He rubbed his eyes, thinking that he was mistaken. But, no, the light was there, wonderfully soft, and yet much stronger than that of the candles. It resembled the light which had surrounded the sleeping child that night on the trail. He strained his eyes, half expecting to behold some angel visitants. And as he looked, the light gradually faded, and by the time the service was ended it had disappeared altogether.

Hugo slipped out of the church, and when the missionary returned to his house he found him sitting near the stove.

"Did you have a nice service?" the trapper asked.

"A remarkable one to-night," was the quiet reply.

"But did you have any congregation? Are not most of the natives away?"

"You are quite right. Tom was the only Indian present, as Kate could not leave Zell. But I was wonderfully inspired at the service to-night. The church seemed to be filled with a great light, and I am certain

that I saw angelic forms filling all the seats, and crowding the building. It may have been an hallucination, though to me it was very real and heartening. But I suppose you will say it is all nonsense. That is too often the way with people of the world who cannot understand such things."

Hugo made no reply just then, but that night as he sat smoking, he turned abruptly to the missionary, busy at his writing.

"How is the girl?" he asked. "Have you seen her to-day?"

"Oh, yes, I have been over several times. There is no change as yet, although Kate thinks that she will recover."

Hugo smoked in silence for a few minutes. At length he rose to his feet, and bent over the table.

"Will you do me a favor?" he asked.

"I shall be only too glad to do so if it is within my power," was the reply.

The trapper at once thrust his right hand into an inside pocket, brought forth the diamond ring, and held it in the palm of his hand. Seeing the look of wonder in the old man's eyes, he smiled.

"It is no wonder that you are surprised, Mr. Norris, for one doesn't come across such as this every day. But I found it in a cabin and I want to give it to you."

"Give it to me!" the missionary exclaimed. "Why what in the world would I do with such a thing as that? I have no use for so valuable a ring as I take that to be."

"Yes, I believe it is valuable. You can sell it some day, and it will repay you a little for your care of that girl."

"But I don't want any pay for that."

"So you won't take it, then?" There was a note of disappointment in the trapper's voice.

"No, I could not think of doing such a thing."

"Will you keep it, then, until I come back? I am going to leave early in the morning, and may not return for several days. I am afraid of losing it on the trail."

"I don't mind doing that," the missionary agreed. "It should be safe here, for I have few visitors, and the one I had last night is not likely to come again."

He took the ring in his hand and examined it closely. He noted the flashing lustre of the diamond when the light of the candle fell upon it.

"I wonder what fair finger this once encircled," he mused, as if to himself. "It's a symbol of that life of which I was once so fond. It brings back old memories which I thought I had forever forgotten. But I left all those things behind when I enlisted beneath the Banner of the Cross."

"Are you happier now than you were then?" Hugo asked.

"I have never really thought about it in that way," was the reply. "But I know I am, for I am in possession of a Great Treasure which gives me peace in times of storm, and joy in the midst of tribulation. A man who once has that need never worry about losing the things of the world."

"I believe you are right," Hugo fervently replied, as he returned to his seat by the fire, and continued his smoke.

CHAPTER 18

A Cowardly Deed

WHEN Charles Norris awoke the next morning he found that Hugo had gone. The previous evening he had shared with him some of the food which old Tom had brought to the house. He had asked the trapper no questions and was unaware of the errand which caused him to leave so early. This was but natural in a country where men as a rule are reticent about their movements. The missionary, who for years had known this strange wanderer of the trails, was pleased at the apparent change which had come over him. He had met him several times out in the hills, and had heard numerous stories from the Indians and others about his great strength and fierceness of manner. He had, accordingly, considered him as an untamable being who for some special reason had fled from civilisation and had buried himself in the northern wilderness. His sympathy in caring for the half-breed girl, and his gentleness while in the house, came somewhat as a surprise to the missionary. He was pleased, too, that the trapper had not scoffed when he told him about the vision he had seen during the service. There must be some good in the fellow, after all, he thought.

After he had prepared and eaten his breakfast, the missionary left the house and went over to his cache, situated several feet from the ground between four big

trees. Here his extra supply of provisions was safe from prowling animals. He carried with him a small ladder which he placed against one of the trees, mounted it and brought down such things as he needed. These he at once took over to Tom's cabin and laid them on the floor.

"I bring these to pay you back for what you gave me," he explained. "You will find some tea there, too. How is Zell?"

"Better this morning, Gikhi," the Indian replied. "Her eyes see, and her tongue speaks straight."

"Ah, that is good, Tom. You and Kate have done well."

He walked over to the bed on the floor where the girl was lying, stooped down and looked into her face. Then he took one of her hands in his, and gave it a slight pressure.

"Do you know me, dear?" he asked.

For a few seconds Zell stared straight at him, as if trying to recall something. Then a slight expression of understanding dawned in her eyes, and her brow wrinkled. This was followed immediately by a look of fear as she raised her right hand and struck feebly at the missionary.

"Go away, go away!" she cried. "Don't, Bill, don't! Oh, let me go!"

"Hush, hush," Norris soothed. "You are safe here with friends. Don't you know me, Zell? It is your own Gikhi who has come to you."

"Gikhi! Gikhi!" the girl repeated. "Not Bill?"

"No, no. Bill is not here. Just Gikhi, Tom, and Kate."

With a sigh Zell closed her eyes and remained very still. The missionary watched her for a few minutes

until he was certain that she was asleep. He then knelt upon the floor by her side, and remained a long time in silent prayer. Tom and Kate sat upon the floor, and with bowed heads waited for the missionary to rise. When he did so, he turned to the faithful natives, and in a low voice told them to summon him when Zell awoke. He then left the building with the intention of going to his own house. But Tom followed close behind, and when the door had been closed, he touched the missionary reverently upon the arm.

"Will Zell get well, Gikhi?" he asked in the Indian tongue.

"Let us hope so," Norris replied, stopping and looking at the native. "I have asked the Good Lord to make her well, so we must leave everything in His hands now. He will do what is best, never doubt."

"But the Good Lord didn't make her that way, Gikhi. He had nothing to do with it."

"I suppose not, but He can cure her, nevertheless."

"Did you hear her speak about Bill, Gikhi?"

"I did. She seemed to be very much afraid of him."

"He is a bad man, Gikhi. Will the Good Lord punish him?"

"Most likely He will. The Judge of all the earth will do right."

"But doesn't the good Lord often leave us to judge and punish, Gikhi?"

He often does, Tom, when it is necessary. But in this case there is nothing we can do. We do not know who Bill is, so how can we punish him? If the Police knew what he did they might track him down."

"But doesn't Gikhi know? It was Bill who stole his grub and money."

At this information the missionary started and his eyes opened wide with surprise.

"Are you telling me the truth?" he asked. "Was it really that man who injured our little girl?"

"It was, Gikhi. I am telling you the truth. When did you know Tom to lie?"

"Is it possible that I fed and cared for the villain who hurt Zell? If I had known! If I had known!"

"What would you have done, Gikhi?"

"What would I have done?" The missionary stared at the Indian. He then placed his hand to his forehead, a sure sign of his perplexity. "I don't know, Tom," he at last confessed. "I am not sure what I would have done. I must go home and think."

He walked slowly away, leaving the Indian gazing after him. Tom turned partly round as if to go back into the house. But he paused, and looked far up the valley. His eyes burned with the fire of a strong resolve, and his hands clenched hard. Years of Christian teaching could not altogether crush out the wild impulse of his nature which he had inherited from countless generations of warriors. Old though he was, he felt the surge of revenge welling strong in his heart.

"Gikhi doesn't know what he would have done to Bill," he mused. "He doesn't know what he will do now. Maybe Tom knows what to do. Ah, ah, Tom knows."

The missionary spent most of the day within his own house, busy with his writing. He was anxious to get his work done as soon as possible that he might send it outside at the first opportunity, thence to be forwarded to England for printing. He knew that it would be two years, at least, before he could receive the first copy for revision, and then further delay ere

it would be completed. By that time the Indians might be ready to return, so he hoped, and would be anxious for the enlarged books of devotion.

Several times during the afternoon he went over to see how Zell was getting along. On his last visit, just as the sun was disappearing beyond the highest mountain peaks, he was delighted to find that the girl recognised him, and gave a slight smile as he spoke to her. She faintly murmured the one word "Tim," and tried to tell him about her lover. But she was so weak that the missionary advised her not to talk just then, but to wait until she was stronger. He noticed that Tom was busy mending his snow-shoes, and asked him where he was going.

"Out to the hills, mebbe," was the evasive reply.

"After game?"

"Ah, ah. Wolf, mebbe."

The missionary asked no further questions, although he wondered why Tom should go hunting for a wolf. He forgot all about this incident, however, as he once again rang the little bell and began the evening service. His heart was full of gratitude at Zell's speedy recovery, which he felt was a direct answer to his prayers. He offered up special thanks that night, and Kate, who was present instead of her husband, was deeply impressed.

"The Good Lord has answered Gikhi's prayer," she told him when the service was ended.

"There is no doubt about it," was the reply. "He has promised to hear us when we ask Him in faith. He never fails His people."

"Will he bring back the Indians, Gikhi?"

"He will, He will, Kate, in His own way, and in His own good time. We must be patient and keep on pray-

ing. He is testing us now, no doubt, that our faith in Him may be strengthened. Perhaps we have trusted too much to our own efforts, and not enough to Him."

That night the missionary bent over his table, while time sped unheeded by. He worked later than usual, for Love was the great theme which occupied his mind. It thrilled his entire being, and drove all sleep from his eyes.

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

He had translated these wonderful words of the Master, and yet he was not satisfied. He longed to express them in such a way that the Indians would have no doubt as to their meaning. He wanted them to know that love was the greatest thing in the world, and that the proof of love was service, even to the giving of one's life, if necessary. Not in receiving, but in giving, was to serve aright. If he could only impress the natives with that great truth, how much might be accomplished.

So deeply engrossed was he with his task, that he did not heed the opening of the door, which was never barred, nor the stealthy entrance of Bill, the Slugger, into the room. He was near the table when the missionary first became aware of his presence. He was greatly startled, and the pen dropped from his hand. Seeing who it was, a peculiar expression appeared in his eyes.

"Where did you come from?" he asked. "I wasn't expecting you."

"Ye wern't, eh?" the visitor snarled. "Thought I'd gone fer sure, did ye?"

"Certainly, after what you did to me." The mis-

sionary was standing now behind the table, his tall form drawn to its full height. "But I am glad you have come back. Is there anything I can do for you? How is your leg?"

"It hurts like hell."

The oath annoyed the missionary, and his eyes flashed with anger. He thought, too, of this man's treatment of Zell. What effect would mild words have upon such a creature? He recalled how the prophets of old had denounced sinners, and even Christ, Himself, had spoken sternly when it was necessary. He restrained himself, however, wishing to give the man another chance.

"I am sorry you stole from me," he said. "Had you asked me, I would have given you all that food, and the money, too, for that matter. Why did you commit that sin?"

"Say, are you a fool or bughouse?" Bill questioned. "Ye must be one or the other to talk sich nonsense."

"I am a fool," was the unexpected reply. "Yes, like the apostles of old, I am a fool for Christ's sake, that I might win souls for Him."

"An' so ye've made a mess of the hull d—— business, eh?"

"What do you mean?"

"Haven't yer Injuns left ye? If ye hadn't been sich a fool, maybe they would have thought more of ye."

"Perhaps they would. Anyway, I did it all for the best."

"If ye'd used a club instead of so many d— whining prayers, they'd had more respect fer ye. It's the big stick that does things these days."

"I don't believe it." The words leaped forth with such fiery vehemence that Bill was surprised. The

missionary's eyes were now blazing with indignation. His clenched hands rested upon the table as he faced his visitor. "You may sneer all you like at prayers, but it was through earnest prayer that the girl you so vilely injured in some way, I know not how, is now recovering."

For an instant Bill was caught off guard. His eyes expressed surprise, mingled with fear. Immediately he regained his self-confidence, however, laughed, and uttered another oath.

"Say, what are ye talkin' about?" he asked. "I know nuthin' about any girl. I wish to G— I could run across a pretty one here."

The missionary made no reply. He stood very erect, looking full into the face of the man before him. He was trying to read his soul, to detect, if possible, whether he was speaking the truth. Before that straight steady gaze, Bill's eyes shifted, and then dropped. The nobleness of this man of God stirred his heart with anger. He could not withstand that silent, unwavering look. It aroused to fury the devil within him more than biting words of reproach. His face assumed an ugly expression, and stepping forward, he leaned across the table.

"Look here," he roared, "d'ye think I've got time to waste in listenin' to sich d— nonsense? The girl ye speak about is nuthin' to me. I don't care whether she lives or dies. But you've got something I want, an' the sooner ye hand it over, the better. D'ye know what I mean?"

"Why, no," the missionary replied, shrinking back a little from the excited man.

"It's the ring ye've got hidden somewhere. That's what I want, so out with it."

"Oh!" The missionary started as if stabbed with a knife. He comprehended now the purpose of this man's visit. The real vileness of his nature was fully revealed.

"What are ye waitin' fer?" Bill demanded. "Didn't ye hear what I said?"

"Yes, I heard, but I am waiting for you to recover your senses."

"My senses are all right," Bill retorted. "But you won't have any senses left to recover if you don't git a hustle on. I want that ring, and at once."

"How do you know that I have a ring?"

"H'm, I know, all right. Didn't I see Hugo, the trapper, give it to you last night?"

"And were you watching?"

"Sure, I was watchin'. Ye don't keep any blinds or curtains to yer windows, see? Oh, I saw the ring, an' know where it came from, too. Hugo killed Bill Haines an' his wife to git that. But I want it, so hurry up."

"What! was it the cause of murder?" the missionary asked, greatly horrified. "Where? When?"

"Along the Yukon, near the C.D. Cut-off. Hugo killed Bill Haines an' his wife, an' threw their bodies into the river."

"How do you know this?" was the unexpected question.

"Never mind how I know. It will all come out when the Police git through with their job. But hurry up, I want that ring."

A great suspicion now swept upon the missionary. He had not heard of any murder, but if one had been committed, he surmised that the man before him was the guilty one. He could not believe that Hugo would

commit such a deed. What should he do? Then he was suddenly aware that he was looking straight into the threatening muzzle of a levelled revolver.

"Ah, I guess that'll bring ye to yer senses," Bill growled. "That carries more weight than all yer pious prayers. That's what will touch the heart quicker than anything I know."

"Would you commit murder for the sake of a paltry ring?" the missionary asked, unabashed by the danger which threatened him.

"It's up to you to stop it, then," was the reply. "If ye don't want me to commit murder, jist give up that ring."

"But I have received it in trust. It is not mine to give."

"That doesn't make any difference to me. You kin explain what happened, and Hugo will understand."

"I won't do such a thing," the missionary sternly declared. "My life is of little value as far as this world is concerned. But my honor means a great deal. You will only get that ring over my dead body."

Under the strain and excitement of the situation the old man suddenly lifted his hand to give emphasis to his words. Thinking that he meant to knock aside the weapon, Bill's hand quickly moved, and his finger pulled the trigger. There was a sharp report, a groan, and a heavy thud as the missionary dropped limp and helpless upon the floor, his head striking the table as he fell.

"Serves the old fool right," Bill muttered, as he stepped around the table and bent over the prostrate man. "That was the only way to stop his d— nonsense. Now fer the ring. I saw him put it in his pocket, an' most likely it's there yit."

CHAPTER 19

Anxious Waiting

THE storm which overcame Sergeant North, and wound its mystic winding-sheet over the land, enshrouded the little brush lean-to which Constable Rolfe had erected for Marion Brisbane. It was merely a rough makeshift affair, and yet it served its purpose. It was sheltered from the fierce wind by the big trees, and through their great outstretched branches the snow sifted gently down. A generous fire radiated its warmth and cheer, and the leaping flames melted and dissolved the falling flakes. Rolfe was kept busy much of the time searching for dry wood, and piling it near to serve not only for the rest of the day but during the long night. Having no axe, this was a difficult task, and he was forced to break off dead branches to add to his supply. Marion longed to be of some use, but the constable jokingly told her that a woman's place was at home looking after the affairs of the household.

"Suppose we have a turkey for dinner to-morrow," he said, as he was about to start forth again on one of his wood-hunting trips. "Just phone your order to Vancouver, and have a big fat bird sent up. Our cook can prepare it to-night, and have it ready for the oven early in the morning."

"I am afraid that our phone is out of order," Marion laughingly replied. "Suppose you call in on your way home and order the turkey."

In this manner the two marooned travellers passed the weary hours. As night shut down upon them, they sang hymns and old familiar songs. Rolfe recited poetry and read inspiring selections from his worn and stained pocket manual.

"What a pity it is," he said, after he had finished several short poems, "that the ones who wrote such verses cannot know of the great help they are to us."

"Perhaps they do know," Marion replied, "especially the ones we call 'dead.' I like to think that the departed have full knowledge of what is taking place on earth. Perhaps even now the writers of those verses are rejoicing because of the help they are to us. Anyway, isn't it great to feel that we never really die, but that our deeds live after us."

"It certainly is," Rolfe acknowledged. "Tennyson has well expressed it in two lines when he says,

"Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow forever and forever."

"Now, that is the idea. Tennyson was thinking of someone blowing a bugle, and how the notes sounded far and wide. In a similar way his words echo on and on, even to this desolate place."

"Why don't you write poetry, Mr. Rolfe?" Marion asked. "I am sure you could do it well. Why not try?"

The constable's face flushed, and he became much embarrassed. He rose and placed several small sticks upon the fire. When this had been accomplished, he turned to Marion.

"I have tried my hand at it," he confessed, "although so far I have accomplished very little. But when I am through with the Force, I hope to give expression to the thoughts which arise within me. There is so much

to write about that it will take years to tell all I want to. The sergeant thinks that it is all nonsense and waste of time. But he doesn't seem to understand. He is so very practical and matter-of-fact."

The mention of the sergeant brought an anxious expression to Marion's face. He had seldom been out of her mind since she had bidden him good-by, and watched him as he strode away. She knew what a difficult journey lay ahead of him, and she feared that he could not accomplish it on his miserable snow-shoes. Then when the storm swept down, her fear increased. Rolfe, too, was alarmed, although he spoke hopefully.

"The sergeant is a wonderful trailsman," he said. "Even if his snow-shoes should give out, he can plow his way through. His endurance is remarkable. Why, I have known him to cross a mountain range in a howling blizzard, and come through almost as fresh as when he started."

"But perhaps he will lose his way," Marion suggested.

"Not a bit of it. You can't lose him. He can follow a trail by instinct. Say, he is a great man. I have been with him on terrible journeys, and I wouldn't be living to-day but for him. He carried me several miles once when I played out. Don't worry about him, Miss Brisbane. He'll get through, all right."

Although these words cheered Marion to a certain degree, yet she could not help feeling uneasy. As the storm increased, and the wind roared overhead, and the trees swayed like great masts at sea, she thought of the man she loved battling his way through the blinding snow and the raging tempest. She also noted that as the evening wore on the constable became unusually silent, at times, and his eyes expressed his anxiety. She

understood the meaning of this, and he could not deceive her when occasionally he aroused himself and assumed an attitude of cheerfulness and unconcern.

Rolfe, in fact, was playing a difficult part. He knew better than Marion the serious situation in which they were placed. If anything happened to the sergeant, it would go hard with them. They might fight their way through when the storm abated. But the chance was only one in a thousand, for now there would not be the least vestige of the trail left, so what could they do on their wretched snow-shoes?

All through the long night Rolfe watched and kept the fire going. Marion slept a little. She tried to keep awake, but weariness overcame her. She would awake shivering with a fearful apprehension of impending evil. She could not shake off this feeling, although she did not mention it to her companion. The tired woe-begone expression upon the constable's face when he thought she was not noticing him smote her heart. Then to see him smile so bravely when she spoke to him thrilled her. She admired his courage, and the brave spirit he was maintaining for her sake. It strengthened her, and made her determine that she would show how a woman can suffer and be strong.

All unconsciously Marion was exerting a strong influence upon the constable's impressionable and poetic nature. Her beauty appealed to him. The noble part he was performing in their present critical situation he considered as nothing out of the ordinary. It was merely what was expected of him as a member of the Force. In Marion Brisbane he had at last found the type of womanhood which had been for years but an ideal. Her brightness, courage, and sweet charm of face and manner inspired him. It was good to be near

her in time of need. His life had been a rough one, but a great inner longing, and the energizing power of a lofty ideal, had kept him clean and straight. He knew very little of the society of women, so it was but natural that he should be deeply affected by this beautiful comrade of the trail.

This feeling, however, Rolfe kept to himself. To him loyalty was as vital as life. It flowed through every part of his being, and never for an instant did he dream of betraying his sergeant's trust in him. So all the time he and Marion were together, neither by word or look did he show that she was anything more to him than a friend for whose welfare he was concerned.

Marion, too, did considerable thinking. Since leaving Kynox she had been mentally comparing her two companions. She liked Rolfe for his jovial manner, and poetic notions. He helped to pass the weary hours, and to enliven the trail. But to her he seemed more like a boy on whom the responsibilities of life pressed but lightly. She would at times glance from him to the sergeant and note the difference between the two—one gay, talkative, and dependent; the other reserved, quiet, and self-reliant. She never associated Tom Rolfe with great deeds of daring, but with John North it was different. To her he was the very embodiment of a true hero. His lithe, powerful body, his strong, clean-cut features, and steady gray eyes appealed to her. It almost frightened her at times to think that she had won the love of such a man, and that she loved him.

She thought of all this as she huddled there before the fire with the tempest raging overhead. She pictured her lover out in the storm, where, she did not

know. And he was doing it for her sake, that she might be saved. Upon himself he had taken the hardships and dangers of the journey. That was always the way of a strong man. He had not asked the constable to go, while he remained behind. Her heart thrilled at the idea, and she longed to tell him how proud she was of him.

Slowly the weary hours dragged by, and when at length the dawn of a new day dispelled the blackness of night, the storm slackened. The wind gradually died down, and the snow ceased to fall. The constable replenished the pile of wood while Marion prepared their meagre breakfast. How tired they both were of moose meat, and yet there was nothing else to keep life within their bodies.

"Meat! meat! meat!" Rolfe exclaimed, as he staggered in and threw down an armful of dry sticks. "I shall write a poem about that some day, and make the word rhyme with 'beat' and 'feet.' "Why, I am inspired now, listen to this:

"Meat! meat! meat!
It keeps me on my feet
When I would go dead beat,
And so I eat, eat, eat."

Marion smiled as she handed the constable a piece of broiled steak.

"Perhaps this will inspire you to take another masterpiece," she bantered. "I am very thankful to be able to contribute something to the work of a genius. Poets must eat, I suppose."

"Right you are," Rolfe replied. They often wrote about eating. I remember what Bobbie Burns said:

"Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat, and we can eat;
Sae let the Lord be thankit."

"Yes, we hae meat," he commented, looking somewhat ruefully upon his piece of burned steak, "but I wonder if Bobbie would say 'Let the Lord be thankit,' if he had nothing but this?"

"But you have an appetite," Marion reminded. "Didn't the poet say that 'Some hae meat and canna eat'? You should be thankful for that. I am, anyway, and I find this meat very good."

Both Marion and Rolfe were feeling more cheerful now. This little round of levity did much to dispel the clouds of despair which overshadowed them during the night. The passing of the storm also had its effect, so they looked hopefully forward to a speedy relief from their trying situation. But as the morning wore away and the afternoon was partly sped, and the sergeant had not come, the feeling of deep concern again oppressed them. They tried to be cheerful, and not to betray their anxiety to each other. But their hearts were troubled, for they both strongly felt that something had happened to the one who alone could bring them the needed help. Rolfe had just replenished the fire for the hundredth time during the day, and was on the point of going after more wood for the night, when a cry of joy from Marion caused him to look quickly around. At first he could hardly believe his eyes, for there was Hugo, the trapper, coming toward them among the trees with great strides. A toboggan trailed behind, containing a bundle, and a pair of snowshoes. His beard was thickly coated with frost, and

he had the appearance of Santa Claus on his mission of goodwill.

After her cry of joy Marion was too much overcome to utter another word until Hugo had thrown the rope from off his shoulders, and stepped from his snowshoes. She then sprang to his side, and impulsively threw her arms around his huge body, much to Rolfe's surprise. Tears of thankfulness were streaming down her cheeks as she looked into her father's face.

"Thank God, you have come!" she at length murmured. "But have you met Sergeant North? Is he safe?"

It was well for Marion's peace of mind that she did not notice the expression which leaped into Hugo's eyes as she asked that question. She wondered, though, why her father somewhat roughly unclasped her arms and moved closer to the fire. She mistook his meaning, thinking that he was the bearer of bad news which he was loath to impart. Her face turned very white.

"Has anything happened to him?" she asked in a voice that was almost a whisper. "Surely he is not dead."

"No, he is not dead," Hugo replied, without looking at her. "At least, he wasn't the last time I saw him. But he was in a bad way when I stumbled across him in that storm. But never mind about him now. How are you two making out? Plenty of grub, eh?"

"Just what you see there," Rolfe replied, pointing to the last of the moose meat hanging from the limb of a tree. "We've had nothing but meat diet for days."

"Well, you might be worse off, young man," Hugo reminded, looking keenly at the constable. "But I've something here which will be a change. It's all I could scrape together, but I guess it will last until we get

out of this. We must not stay long, for the sergeant, in whom you are so much interested, is waiting our coming several miles away."

This was good news to Marion and Rolfe. They asked several more questions, but receiving no satisfactory reply, they desisted. Hugo had brought some tea, and when this had been prepared in a small tin can which he always carried with him, they were greatly refreshed. He had also a supply of "sourdough" bread, and a tin of jam. To the ones who had been living for days upon meat these proved great delicacies.

"Why, this is regular hotel fare," Rolfe remarked, as he helped himself to a second large slice of bread. "We only need the napkins and a few other accessories to make it the real thing."

Marion smiled, but Hugo seemed to take no notice of the young man's remarks. In fact, he had not heard him. His mind was upon more important matters. He was tired, as well, for he had been on the march through most of the storm, and long before dawn that day. He did not tell of the terrible struggle he had made to reach his cabin far beyond the valley, of his brief rest there while he packed up his meagre supply of food, and his starting forth again before the storm had spent its fury. It was not his way to tell of such things. He had accomplished his purpose, and that gave him all the satisfaction he needed.

But he was greatly disappointed. He had done it all for Marion's sake, and upon his arrival at the camp in the forest her first question was about the sergeant. She had come to him from that world which he never expected to see again. She had brought a new inspiration into his life. She had changed him until he hardly knew himself. And yet for all that she was not his.

She belonged to another, a member of the Force from which he had been fleeing for years. And yet he knew it was his own fault. He had left her and her mother to face the reproach of the world, and like a coward had fled to the wilderness. But Marion had followed him! She had found him! Surely there must be love in her heart for her wayward father.

All this swept through his mind during the short time he rested at the camping-place. There were other things as well which caused him considerable uneasiness, all of which, however, he wisely kept to himself.

CHAPTER 20

United Forces

THE sun of the short winter day was sinking below the distant mountain peaks away to the west. It touched with its departing rays three forms moving slowly across a vast desolate waste of snow. Hugo, the trapper, and Tom Rolfe, the constable, were in harness, drawing the toboggan on which Marion was seated. The men were on snow-shoes, with Hugo ahead, with ropes across their shoulders. They were part way over the burnt region where the sergeant had been overcome by the storm when the sun went down. Ahead in the distance where the trees stood thick and sombre, they planned to rest for the night. Here they hoped to find the sergeant, and Marion's heart beat fast at the thought of meeting him again.

It was dark by the time they reached the edge of the forest, and a few rods among the trees they found the sergeant standing before a cheerful fire. His face brightened with joy as he saw them, and in another minute he had Marion clasped in his arms. Hugo and Rolfe pretended not to notice the meeting of the lovers, but busied themselves about the fire.

Strange thoughts were beating through the trapper's mind for all his apparent unconcern. How he longed for Marion to greet him in such an affectionate manner as she did the sergeant. He was her father, while the other she had known but a short time. A sudden im-

pulse swept upon him to get off by himself, and forget forever that he had a daughter. He would crush out every vestige of affection from his heart, and turn his hand more strongly than ever against all mankind. He had been a weak fool to be so easily deluded by mere sentiment.

He straightened himself up with a jerk from his bending position. Yes, he would go at once, pretending that he had business elsewhere. But just then Sergeant North stepped toward him, and held out his hand.

"I want to thank you for what you have done," he began. "I can never repay you. Let us henceforth be friends."

Taken completely aback by this unexpected move, Hugo hesitated. It was only for a minute, however, and then he drew his body to its full height and looked steadily into the eyes of the man standing before him.

"How can we be friends?" he asked. "Am not I a suspected criminal? Have you not been seeking me for years? But for a peculiar turn of events, I would now be away in the fastness of the hills where you could never find me. I am your prisoner now, so how can captor and captive be friends?"

"You are no captive of mine," the sergeant calmly replied. "You may leave this place whenever you wish, and no hand will be raised to restrain you. I never yet arrested a man who did what you have done for us."

"But how can you face your commanding officer when you meet him if you let me go? In the eyes of the law I am a criminal. Have you forgotten that?"

"I never knew it to forget, Hugo. Explain what you mean."

"About that murder near the C. D. Cut-Off, of course. Am I not suspected of that? Have you not been on my trail ever since you heard of my visit to the Kynox hospital with the little child?"

"You are right, but only to a certain extent. Your actions naturally aroused our suspicions, especially after you fled that night from the cabin when we had taken shelter from the storm. But I had no orders from Headquarters to follow you. I merely took the matter into my own hands while on patrol from the river to The Gap. I wished to overtake you to find out from your own lips what you knew about that murder. But now I would no more think of suspecting you than I would Marion. You are too noble a man to do such a diabolical deed. Do you not believe me?"

"And you say that you never had orders to follow me and arrest me?" Hugo asked in surprise. "Are you sure that the Force hasn't been on the watch for me for years? Haven't I been looked upon as a criminal escaped from justice?"

Into the sergeant's mind there came all at once something which partly explained the reason of the strange actions of the man standing before him. He had evidently been labouring for years under a great misapprehension. He had been obsessed with the idea that the Police were searching for him. It was quite apparent that the man had fled from the ways of civilisation, but to imagine that he could escape in the northland was ridiculous. Of all places on the earth the Yukon territory was the worst region for any criminal to flee for refuge. Here the two Divisions of the Mounted Police spread out their marvellous net into the most remote recesses. No miscreant had ever yet escaped, no matter to what part of the world he

had fled. Had they wanted Hugo, the trapper, they could have taken him years ago. They knew of his wanderings, and his peculiarities. Although the man was a mystery, they never interfered with his manner of living. To them he was a harmless being, one of many dwelling in the country.

"We never considered you as a criminal," the sergeant replied. "We never had any orders to arrest you."

"You didn't!" Hugo exclaimed. "Why, then, did you demand me to surrender when I found you wallowing about in the snow, overcome by the storm?"

"I wanted to hold you that you might give evidence in the murder case. And, besides, I guess I must have been half crazy that day. I hardly knew what a fool thing I was doing."

"H'm, you are certainly right. But it was a mighty plucky thing to do, as I told you then. Why, I could have knocked you on the head and no one would have been the wiser. It would have been charged to the storm."

"Why didn't you do it? It was your great opportunity."

"Because I am not a brute. And, further, for my daughter's sake. Now you understand."

"I do," the sergeant replied. "And for her sake, if for nothing else, let us be friends."

Once more he held out his hand, which Hugo immediately grasped. For a few seconds they faced each other without a word. Their eyes met in a steady look, and their hearts thrilled. Thus two strong men became friends there in the heart of the great wilderness. The bond of union was sealed which neither would lightly break.

All this had been of intense interest to Marion. She listened to the conversation, and studied the faces of the two men with fast-beating heart. But when they at length clasped hands, she sprang forward and threw her arms about her father. Her eyes were moist with tears, but her face was radiant with joy.

"Oh, I am so glad, so glad!" she murmured. "Now we can all be happy."

"Why, yes, so we can," Hugo replied, his heart lighter than it had been for years. "And something to eat will make us happier still."

"Supper all ready on the dining car," was the startling and unexpected announcement from Rolfe, who had been busy preparing the meal. His face was beaming with satisfaction as the three turned toward him. "Seats for two right here," he continued, motioning to a blanket spread out upon some fir boughs. "Please walk this way."

"You are to be congratulated, Mr. Rolfe," Marion smilingly told him. "You have served a wonderful supper."

"It certainly is, Miss Brisbane. Fried moose steak, with things we call 'potatoes,' bread, hardtack, biscuits, jam, and tea. Say, this is a banquet after what we've been eating."

"Poetry, eh, Tom?" the sergeant queried. "Those are the best words I've heard you utter in a long time. That's the kind of poetry which appeals to me."

"Oh, that's nothing to what I can do, sergeant. Just listen to this:

"Give me, oh, give me, just as I am,
Potatoes and moose steak, hardtack and jam.

"Doesn't that strike you as a masterpiece? Let me

sing it for you. I am sure you will enjoy it. I can add more lines as I go along."

"Mercy! Mercy, Tom!" the sergeant exclaimed, taking his seat at Marion's side. "We've come through enough hardships of late. Do you wish to inflict on us any more?"

"I only wanted to cheer you all up," Rolfe explained. "After your most solemncoly and dramatic spiel, I thought a little diversion wouldn't come amiss. However, if you don't appreciate my efforts, I shall keep my great thoughts to myself. The course of true genius, like love, never did run smooth. I guess it's something like what Crabbe, the poet, said:

"Genius! thou gift of Heav'n! thou light divine!
Amid what dangers art thou doom'd to shine!"

While Rolfe was thus talking, Hugo was watching him most intently. His gray eyes shone with humor, a striking contrast to the fire of fear and rage which had so often gleamed in those same orbs.

"Young man," he began, "your words do me good. It's been long years since I have heard the light chatter of youth. Tragedy has been hanging dark over my life. It has surrounded me on every trail, and entered into my very soul. I have been a victim of gloom and despair. To me the past was as a closed book, the present a period of misery, and the future held out no hope. At times I had almost forgotten that I was a man, and was in danger of becoming a mere brute. But a change has taken place. The spirit of heaviness has been removed, and I see with other eyes. Give me your hand, young man, and let us shake. I like your buoyant spirit."

Rolfe was much surprised at this unexpected speech,

and as he seized the trapper's outstretched hand in a firm grip, his bronzed face flushed with pleasure.

"Thank you, sir," he replied. "I am pleased to know that you appreciate my poetic chatter, and that it has done something to dispel the clouds of darkness from your soul. I hope the rest of our discerning company will make a note of this. It is certainly great to have such peace and harmony reigning in our midst. This has been a regular old-time experience meeting. I shall now call on the sergeant to lead us in singing the 'Doxology.' He has a wonderful voice, which once heard can never be forgotten."

The truce agreed upon that night was a real one. It was a calm after storm, peace after conflict. All were weary after the toil of the day and for lack of sleep, and it was a great comfort to sit near the bright fire and talk about the events of the last few days. Marion's face grew grave as Hugo told about finding the half-breed girl, lost, demented, and how he had taken her to one of his cabins, and from there to The Gap. He passed lightly over what that journey had meant to him, and how for several miles he had been forced to carry the unconscious girl in his arms.

"Poor Zell!" Marion said. "She was so bright and animated when we left Big Chance. She was longing to hurry back to be once more with her wounded young lover. She must have become lost when she went after the wood."

"The girl was not lost at first," Hugo replied. "She was carried off by that villain, Bill, the Slugger. I have proof, and when we come face to face there will be another kind of experience meeting. The mean, contemptible cur! Why, he even rewarded the hospitality of the missionary at The Gap, that noble man of

God, by stealing all of his food, and lighting out some time in the night. It might be as well, sergeant, to round up that brute and ask him a few questions about that murder near the C. D. Cut-off."

"I am not surprised at what you tell me," the sergeant replied. "Bill is a bad man, and we need him. I was hoping to be first at The Gap to head him off. The task will be much more difficult now, so we shall need your help."

"And you shall have it," Hugo emphatically declared. "I shall do everything in my power to bring the guilty to justice."

For a long time that night the sergeant and Hugo talked after Marion and the constable were asleep. The trapper told all he knew about finding the Haines child in the lonely cabin, and the blood-stains leading to the river. But of the finding of the diamond ring he said nothing. He would explain about that when he received it from the missionary, and handed it over to the sergeant.

"I never expected to tell you all this," he said in conclusion. "I looked upon the Force as my deadly enemy, for reasons which you already partly know. What led me to flee to this country I do not wish to explain now. That can wait. But I see things in a new light, and I am glad. I have been living long enough in hell, but have at last escaped. There, now, I think we have talked enough. We need rest, for a hard journey lies ahead of us to-morrow."

CHAPTER 21

Helping Hands

INDIAN TOM had made special preparations for his trip to the hills. He kept his plans to himself, merely telling Kate that he hoped to bring back a fat mountain sheep. Old though he was, it was nothing out of the ordinary for him to go a short distance from The Gap and return with fresh meat. Kate, with her keen intuition, surmised that her husband had something more important in his mind, and that he intended going farther than usual. She made no comment, however, for Tom was master of his own affairs, and possessed of a strong will. Kate, like other Indian women, had been trained from childhood to be silent and to wait.

With everything in readiness, Tom planned to start early the next morning. With his pack of food strapped across his shoulders, moccasins on his feet, and rifle in hand, he slipped forth from his cabin and made his way to the mission house. He wished to see the Gikhi, to tell him that he would be away for several days, and to ask him to look after the welfare of his wife and Zell. He knew that the missionary was an early riser, and expected to find him seated at the table busy with his writing. He had often visited the house early in the morning and had always seen the light shining through the little window.

As he drew near the mission house he was surprised

to find it wrapped in darkness. The Gikhi must have overslept himself, he thought, and at first he hesitated about awaking him. But as his business was of urgent importance, he tapped upon the door, and then pushed it gently open. All was dark within and the room was cold. A fear that something was wrong suddenly entered his mind. He took a few steps forward, and then stopped to listen. But not a sound could he hear.

"Gikhi!" he called.

Receiving no reply, he felt certain that something had happened to his beloved missionary. Laying aside his rifle, he brought forth from a pocket of his jacket a small candle. This he lighted, and when the flame was large enough, he looked carefully around. At first he could see nothing, but as he advanced to examine the bedroom, his eyes rested upon the form of the missionary lying upon the floor near the table. With a gurgle of consternation, Tom stooped and looked upon the prostrate man. He felt his face, and found that it was strangely cold. Quickly placing the candle upon the table, he lifted the missionary in his arms, carried him over and laid him down upon the cot on the other side of the stove. Going back for the candle, he looked keenly around. But nothing could he see to give him any clue to the cause of the trouble. He then went over to the cot, and again felt the still, cold face. He placed his ear close to the missionary's mouth, but could detect no sign of life.

Forgotten now was his visit to the hills. His only thought was for his beloved missionary. He needed help, and the only one who could be of any assistance was his wife. Leaving the house, he hurried to his own cabin, told Kate in a few words what he had found, and ordered her to come at once. Zell was

sleeping quietly, so following her husband, Kate was soon at the mission house. She rushed at once to the missionary's side, and looking upon him lying there so still and white, a great cry of grief broke from her lips.

"Gikhi! Gikhi!" she called.

But for the first time no response came to her earnest appeal. The man who had led her out of darkness of heathenism was deaf to her voice. Wildly she looked around, and then up into Tom's face.

"Is he dead?" she asked. "Has someone killed him?"

"It looks like it," Tom replied, placing the forefinger of his right hand close to the side of the missionary's head. "See! See! Blood! Gikhi has been shot! Bad! Ugh!"

Then a wild rage filled his heart. The spirit of revenge, inherited from countless generations of warriors, possessed him. The Gikhi, the man who meant so much to him, had been shot by an enemy! He surmised who it was, for no one but Bill, the Slugger, was in the neighbourhood. Swiftly he turned and spoke a few rapid words to his wife. He next set to work and built a fire in the stove. In a short time the genial heat was pervading the room. He then started to work upon the body of the missionary, rubbing the cold form and applying hot cloths.

Night passed, and morning dawned, but still Tom remained at his task. Could he ever bring life into that still form? But at length he was rewarded, for slowly a warmth returned to the body, and the beating of the heart could be detected. Kate went back to her own cabin to see how Zell was getting along, and returned ere long with a cup containing a little Indian

medicine, concocted the previous summer from various roots and herbs. Between the missionary's firm-set teeth some of this was pressed, and in a short time the faithful natives had the satisfaction of seeing the Gikhi give a sigh and open his eyes. He then closed them again, and remained as motionless as before.

All through the morning the Indians did what they could for the missionary. They knew, however, that their efforts were but temporary, and that the white doctor at Kynox was urgently needed. But who could go for him? There was not an Indian runner anywhere near, and the hospital was far away.

Several times during the morning Kate went over to see how Zell was getting along. The girl, who was now greatly improved, wondered at the Indian woman's excited manner, and why she was in such a hurry to return to the mission house. She questioned her, but received only an evasive answer. Zell had now reached the stage of recovery when she was restless and impatient to be doing something. Although still weak from the terrible experiences through which she had passed, she was anxious to go back to Tim, and to take the Gikhi with her. How they would go, she had no definite idea. But her faith in the missionary was so great that she believed he could do the impossible. She had not spoken to him as yet about her injured lover at Big Chance. She wanted to see him alone, when Tom and Kate were not present. She was greatly worried, too, about the white woman she had left by the camp-fire that night of the terrible happenings. She had spoken of her to Tom and Kate, but they knew nothing. Her mind was still confused and it was difficult for her to think very clearly. But Tim and the white woman were ever before her. They were in

need, so she must go to them. The Gikhi alone was the one who could help her.

All through the morning Zell worried and wondered. She dragged her weak body to the little window facing the mission house and watched through a small clear space in the frost-bedecked panes. It was a lonely vigil she kept, for Kate was a long time in coming. What could be keeping her and Tom so long with the Gikhi? She looked westward and the great towering mountains met her eyes. The Golden Horn, robed in its snowy mantle, caught the bright beams of the winter sun, and smiled its benediction over the stark and silent land. Far away in a little crouching creek at its base was Big Chance, where lay the one she loved most on earth. And she could not go to him. She did not know whether he was dead or alive. Tears came to her eyes and flowed down her cheeks. Her face was wan and pale, a striking contrast to her animated countenance of a few days before.

At last she felt that she could endure the suspense no more. Kate had been away longer than usual, and she was sure that something was wrong with Gikhi. Picking up a blanket and wrapping it about her head and shoulders in Indian fashion, she left the cabin, and slowly made her way along the path leading to the mission house. Several times she tottered, so weak was she, but at length reaching the door, she leaned against the building and listened. Hearing no sound from within, she softly pushed open the door and entered. The sight which met her eyes caused her to pause and her heart to beat fast. She saw the Gikhi lying upon the cot, with Kate kneeling by his side, and Tom standing a few feet away. With a cry which caused Kate to leap to her feet, the girl rushed forward. She

reached the cot, and exhausted by the exertion, she dropped upon her knees and threw her arms over the still form lying there. Not a word did she utter, but sobbed as if her heart would break.

Kate and Tom looked upon the weeping girl with surprise, and spoke low to each other. Then the woman laid her right hand upon the girl's shoulder and gently shook her.

"You should not be here," she reproved. "This is no place for you."

But Zell made no reply. If she heard what was said she gave no sign, but with outstretched arms and bent head continued her sobbing.

Kate spoke more sharply to her now, and tried to draw her away. This aroused the girl, and she turned fiercely upon the woman.

"Leave me alone," she cried. "I have the right to be here. Gikhi was good to me, and now he is dead!"

Again she bowed her head and remained perfectly motionless, Kate and Tom watching her, not knowing what to do. The girl puzzled them. They knew that she had run away from the mission school, which had been a great grief to the missionary and his wife. Now she had come back, and avowed her love for the Gikhi.

They were still standing there when a noise outside arrested their attention. Then a knock sounded upon the door. As no one entered, Tom crossed the room, opened the door and looked out. Standing before him were four weary-looking people, three of whom he at once recognised. But the white woman he did not know.

"Is the missionary at home?" Sergeant North asked, surprised to see the Indian.

Tom, however, made no reply, but stared intently at the sergeant.

"Is anything wrong with the missionary?" the sergeant asked. "Is he sick?"

"Ah, ah, Gikhi much seek," Tom replied. "Gikhi all sam' dead."

With a bound the sergeant was in the room, closely followed by his companions. Hearing the strange voices, Zell lifted her head and looked around. Seeing Marion, she staggered to her feet, and with a pathetic cry of joy and surprise started to go to her. But the recent excitement had been too much for her. She tottered and would have fallen had not Hugo sprang forward and caught her in his arms.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he asked, looking sternly at Kate. "What has happened to the missionary?"

"Bad white man shoot Gikhi," the Indian woman explained. "Here," and she placed her hand to her head. "Put Zell in room," she added, pointing to the bedroom on the left.

Hugo did as he was ordered, carried the unconscious girl into the little room, and laid her gently upon the bed. Marion followed, and bent over the girl. Then she went to the door and spoke to Kate.

"Bring me some cold water," she ordered. "Quick."

When this was brought, she bathed Zell's face, and ere long had the satisfaction of seeing the girl open her eyes. For an instant she stared at Marion, and then the light of recognition dawned in her eyes, and her lips parted in a smile.

"Are you feeling better now?" Marion asked.

"Yes, better. But how did you come here? Where have you been? I thought you were lost."

"I am safe, Zell," was the reply. "But never mind about that now. I shall tell you later."

Marion was about to leave to go back into the other room, when Zell caught her by the hand.

"Save the Gikhi's life," she pleaded. "Don't let him die. I want him to speak to me again, to tell me that he forgives me."

"I shall do what I can for him," Marion assured. "But if he has been shot, he will need more aid than I can give."

"The doctor, you mean?"

"Yes. I wish Dr. Rainsford could come. He might be able to find the bullet and save the missionary's life."

"Can't some one go for him?" Zell asked. "Oh, if I were only strong, I would go myself. Perhaps he is at Big Chance now. You said he would come to see Tim, didn't you, Miss?"

"I left word at Kynox for him to come as soon as he arrived. But that seems a long time ago now, and he may have made the trip and returned to Kynox."

"But perhaps he has remained to look after Tim," Zell eagerly suggested. "Something tells me that he is at Big Chance now. Wouldn't he come like the wind if he knew the Gikhi needed him?"

"I believe he would," Marion agreed. "The doctor is a remarkable man, and always willing to make any sacrifice in order to help others."

"But how can we get word to him? Who will make the long, hard journey?"

"I will."

Marion gave a sudden start, and looked quickly round at these words. Just behind her stood her father, bulking large in the doorway.

"The girl is right," he said. "I happened to over-

hear what she said. The doctor may be at Big Chance. Anyway, if he isn't there he will be somewhere."

"And you will go—father!" Marion exclaimed in surprise.

"If I don't, who will? The missionary is too good a man to let die without making an effort to save his life."

"But suppose you are overtaken by a storm, a snow-slide, a pack of wolves, or some other terrible thing? That trail over which we came lies right in the very shadow of death."

Hugo merely smiled at his daughter's anxiety. How could he explain that dangers meant nothing to him? The wilderness was his home, and a journey which might appal others was as life to his being. He also kept to himself another reason why he wished to go for the doctor. He believed that the diamond ring which he had intrusted to the missionary was the cause of the shooting. He had made a brief search for it, but could not find it. There was but one explanation, according to his way of thinking. Someone must have been watching through the window that night he had given the ring to Charles Norris. Only one man in the vicinity, he felt certain, would commit such a deed. Hugo, accordingly, felt somewhat responsible for what had happened to the missionary, and it was necessary for him to do all in his power to help him.

Leaving the bedroom, Marion went to the side of the unconscious man. She looked upon his pale face and long beard. How noble he seemed lying there, like a warrior at rest, so she thought. He was breathing, but so low that only with difficulty could it be detected. The sergeant was standing near, while the constable was at the stove preparing something for supper. Tom

and Kate were nowhere to be seen. They had slipped out of the room and had gone to their own cabin shortly after the arrival of the white people.

"What are we to do, Marion?" the sergeant asked. "This is a bad job, and the man responsible for this deed must be brought to justice. But in the meantime what are we going to do with this man?"

"Suppose we move him from here," Marion suggested. "Isn't that his bedroom over there?" and she looked toward a door on the left. "You men can carry him in while I go and prepare the bed."

In a few minutes this was done. The missionary was laid gently upon his own bed, and for a time he was left alone. A little later Rolfe summoned them to supper, and while they were eating they discussed their plans for the future. Marion agreed to remain with the missionary.

"Zell will be with me," she explained, "and I know that the Indian woman who was here when we came will do what she can. I hope that you all will be back soon without any mishap."

"I am sorry to leave you," the sergeant replied, "but there is nothing else to do. It is our duty, you see, and that must come first."

"Oh, I hope nothing will happen to you out there. The mountains beyond here are very dangerous places, so I have heard. Will you follow right after that wretched man?"

"Yes, until we find him dead or alive. But I don't believe he will be very far away, owing to the injury to his foot. You remember what Hugo told us."

"But he can shoot, though. He can hide and watch you coming, and can shoot you both down."

"We shall have to take that risk, Marion. But I

guess we are too old hands to be caught napping, are we not, Tom?"

"I guess you're right, sergeant," Rolfe replied. "Why, we're going to do wonders out there. Some day I shall write a poem about it which will beat Tennyson's 'Charge of the Light Brigade' all to pieces. It will tell about Sergeant North leading a lone constable into the jaws of death with mountain to the right of them, with mountain to the left of them, with mountain in front of them. Such a poem should make me famous."

"That will be too much of a fuss about the pursuit of one man, and lame at that," the sergeant dryly replied. "Surely you can hit upon a more heroic subject."

"Oh, I'll make it heroic enough, sergeant, never fear. I shall bring in about a lone woman left in fear and trembling, while two heroes marched forth to avenge the wrong done to an old man. Never you mind, I shall fix it up in great style."

Leaving the men to continue their talking, Marion arose and went into the bedroom where the missionary was lying. He was just as she had left him. Sitting down by his side, she watched him. A great respect for this man stole into her heart. She had heard much about him, and his wonderful devotion and self-sacrifice. Her heart thrilled at the thought of what he had given up for a great Cause. And was this to be the end of it all? No worldly applause, no honor, and an apparent defeat of all his efforts. She spoke of it that night to the sergeant as they sat talking while the rest slept.

"Is such a life wasted?" she asked. "Will there be no result of all his labors?"

"His work can never die," the sergeant quietly re-

plied. "The Indians have deserted him and his teaching for a time. But it cannot be for long. Some day, I believe, they will see the error of their ways and return to him again."

"But suppose he should die?"

"Then another will reap the harvest. One sows and another reaps."

CHAPTER 22

The Messenger

FROM early dawn Tom, the Indian, had been on the trail. Dusk was settling over the land as he paused on the brow of a hill and looked anxiously down into the valley below. His eyes were keenly alert, his ears attentive to the least sound, and he sniffed the air for the camp-fire scent. He was weary, and longed to rest. But he had an important mission to fulfil, so he could not stop until that was accomplished. He was old and unaccustomed to hard travelling. His trips of late had been to the hills surrounding The Gap for mountain sheep, grouse, and ptarmigan. Only a great incentive had induced him to undertake this venture. He had his doubts as to how he would be received by the Indians scattered over the hunting-grounds. They had acted in a strange and rebellious mood of late, so the hope of influencing them was not very encouraging. But the vision of a wronged girl and the wounded Gikhi animated his soul, and inspired him with an overmastering determination. If what had recently happened at The Gap would not open the eyes of the Indians and give them a change of heart, nothing else would. He felt that the time was opportune, and that he must make the most of it.

Leaving the brow of the hill he descended into the valley, and ere long had the satisfaction of seeing a light among the trees not far ahead. That Indians

were encamped there was certain, and in a few minutes he came in sight of a big log lean-to where a number of natives were gathered around a cheerful fire. Several dogs heralded his approach, while a number of men leaped to their feet and ordered the animals to be still. In another minute Tom was in their midst, and accorded a hearty welcome. All were glad to see him for his sake alone, if for nothing else. They concealed their curiosity, for they were well aware that only a matter of extreme importance would bring the old man so far from his home in the dead of winter.

About a dozen people, men, women, and children, were encamped here. They were a hardy lot, well enured to the cold, and living the simple life. This was their natural domain, and here they were free from the vices of the frontier towns and mining camps. Could they have been kept here, all would have been well with them. But the attractions and temptations of lighted streets, gaily-bedecked stores, and warm saloons, were hard to be resisted. Such things formed the principal topic of conversation during the long winter evenings, and all looked eagerly forward to spring when they could once more gratify their desires.

Tom knew of all this and how hard it would be for them to be drawn away from such allurements. He felt that he might influence the older ones, but had little hope of doing anything with the young men and women. He did not at first explain the purpose of his coming, but after he had eaten the food which was set before him, he sat near the fire and talked about many things except that which was nearest his heart. He heard also how the Indians were getting along with their season's hunt, as well as bits of gossip from other encampments.

After a while, however, Tom laid aside the pipe he was smoking, and took a little book from a pocket inside his buckskin jacket. This he opened, and then looked around upon his companions.

"You all know what this is," he began. "It was given to us by the Gikhi at The Gap. Some of you remember when the Gikhi first came to live among us. His body was strong then, his eyes bright, and his hair black. We opposed him, and the medicine men stirred us up against him. Several times we tried to kill him, but the Great Spirit always saved the Gikhi. He was good to us, and when a plague came upon us, he cared for us, nursed us when we were sick, and saved many lives. When we were hungry he always shared with us his food. But he did more than that. He started a school for our little ones, taught them to read and write, and how to do many useful things. Above all, he gave us the Great Message which changed our lives, and lifted us from the level of the brutes. Before he came, we treated our wives like slaves, and worse than dogs. Now it is altogether different. Our wives are our companions, and we use them right. Before the Gikhi came, baby girls were badly treated. Mothers often let them die rather than permit them to grow up to lead hard lives. Now our little ones are well cared for. Before the Gikhi came, we were always waging war upon neighbouring tribes. We thirsted for battle and slaughter. Now we are all living in peace. And before the Gikhi came we allowed our old Indians to die without any care. We would abandon them on the trails, and let them perish. That is all changed now, and our old men and women are well looked after. Before the Gikhi came we had no knowledge of Him who came on earth and died that we might be saved.

We know now. The Gikhi did all that for us. He gave us this book, and taught us how to read it. Here we find the Great Message of life and Eternal Hope, hope which we never had before. Our little ones have been taught to sing hymns, and you all remember what wonderful services we had in the church which the Gikhi built. We were very happy then, and all looked forward to coming back to The Gap to hear the Message from the Gikhi's lips."

Tom paused, while a sad expression overspread his face. He noted how intently all had listened to his words. He believed that he was making some impression upon them.

"A great change came," he continued, "which broke up the Gikhi's work. Gold was discovered, and the white men flocked into our country, and you know what they did. They brought in hootch which ruined our young men and women, and many of the older ones, too. Our girls were led astray, and the school broken up. The influence of the Gikhi was gone, for the Indians nearly all left him. His wife died, I believe through grief. She loved the Indians, and she was always a friend to them. The Gikhi was left alone, but every night he rang the little bell and held service in the church. He always prayed that the Indians would come back, and he said that he wanted to be there when they came. But now I am afraid it will be too late, and that the Indians will never see the Gikhi again."

Again Tom paused, and for a few seconds he sat very still, his head bent forward. That he was in deep grief, the Indians were well aware.

"Has Tom bad news to give?" one of the natives asked. "Is the Gikhi sick?"

"Ah, ah, the Gikhi is more than sick," Tom replied, as he lifted his head. "An enemy came at night and shot the Gikhi."

At these words the men sprang to their feet and a babel of voices ensued. Tom was plied with questions, so he told all he knew, and also about what had happened to Zell. Deep, burning indignation filled the hearts of all present, and they vowed vengeance upon the one who had committed the dastardly deed.

"Where is Bill now?" was asked.

"Somewhere in the mountains," Tom explained. "The Police are after him. They will catch him before long, and take him back to The Gap."

"The Indians will help to catch Bill," a stalwart hunter announced. "They will track him down."

"Let the Police do that," Tom replied. "The Indians must go back to The Gap. They must show their love for the Gikhi. They must give up their bad ways. They have wandered too far already, but it is not too late. Will the Indians do that?"

The critical moment had at last arrived, and Tom anxiously waited for a reply. He knew how much these Indians had been stirred by what they had just heard. But would it affect their actions? And while he waited, the oldest hunter present lifted his hand for silence.

"We have just received very sad and important news," he began. "It is a great grief to us to learn what has happened to the Gikhi. Our hearts are all the more sad because we have left him and neglected his teachings. I have been thinking much this winter while out in the mountains. I have seen our young men and women wandering into strange trails, and leading lives far worse than before the Gikhi came into

our midst. It is not good for them, and unless a change takes place the Indians will all be ruined. I have been reading the little book that Gikhi gave us, and on many nights when alone by my camp-fire I have studied the Message of the Great White Chief who came to die for us. If we follow His trail all will be well. The Gikhi has told us what to do, and he himself has set us the example. He did not come among us to cheat us in trade. He did not use hard words, but was always gentle. He did not bring hootch among us, but he brought us the Living Message to save our souls. He became as one of us, sharing our joys and sorrows, and healing our bodies. And what have we done in return? We have been false to him who did so much for us. We have followed the trails of the enemy, and now one of their number has stricken down the Gikhi. Let us call all the Indians together, go back to The Gap, and be once more with the Gikhi. He may die, as Tom says, but let us be there when he starts on the Long Trail, and it may be that he will see and understand. Around our beloved Gikhi let us gather, old and young, and promise to be true to the teaching of the Great White Chief in Heaven. All who agree with what I have said let them now speak."

For a few minutes there was silence when the old Indian had finished. At length one by one the hunters expressed their views, and all with one consent agreed to return to The Gap, and renew their allegiance. It was an impressive scene to behold those husky natives give voice to the strong conviction which animated their souls. Tom's eyes glowed with pleasure, and when the men ceased speaking, he lifted up the book he had been holding in his hand.

"Let this be our guide," he said. "What it contains

will do us more good than the words of the bad white men. I am now going to read a Message from the Great White Chief."

Then in a clear voice he read in the rhythmical native tongue the story which can never grow old, of the Good Shepherd seeking the sheep which had gone astray in the wilderness until He found it. He read the words with intense pathos, and when he had ended, he closed the book, and lifting up his voice, he began the hymn of "Nearer My God to Thee," of which the Indians were very fond.

"Ndo nyet nyakkwun Ttia
Ndo nyet nyakkwum,
Kwizyit nititae,
Guselshit chi.
Tthui sih chilig telya
Ndo nyet nyakkwum Ttia,
Ndo nyet nyakkwum."

The hymn ended, Tom dropped upon his knees, his companions doing likewise, and offered up a few simple prayers, one of which was an earnest appeal that the Gikhi might be spared, and that the Indians might once more return to the right way. He concluded with the Lord's Prayer, in which all joined. As their voices rose as one, all of Tom's fears were removed. He believed that these Indians would remain true, and that never again would they be induced to go astray.

CHAPTER 23

Rejected

EARLY the next morning Tom left the encampment and headed eastward. He was greatly encouraged at the reception he had received from this first group of Indians, and he hoped that all the others would be of the same mind. He had some doubt, however, concerning a large band about fifteen miles away. Numerous young people were there, who more than the rest had become completely infatuated with the ways of Belial. They, like a certain class in modern society of white folks, looked with contempt upon the old-fashioned ways of their parents. They scoffed at the Gikhi and his teaching as out of date, or suitable only for women and children. Their chief delight was to visit the nearest town, array themselves in the finest clothes they could buy, strut up and down the streets, displaying their cheap and gaudy jewelry. Had they stopped at that it would not have been so bad. But they did far worse, both young men and women alike.

Tom knew of all this, yet he hoped that out in the mountains, away from such contaminating influences, they would more readily listen to his message, and that their hearts would be touched by the condition of their once beloved Gikhi. He believed that they had not wandered so far but that they could be induced to return to the right way. Anyway, he considered it his duty to speak to them. So much in earnest was this

old Indian, and advancing years had increased his intensity, that he did not feel at peace while so many of his people were wandering from the fold. So long as a little strength remained, he was determined to do what he could.

Twice during the day he met several Indians along the trail. To them he gave his message, telling of the willingness of the ones he had met the night before to go back to The Gap and renew their allegiance. These listened with great interest, and all expressed themselves ready to join in the return to the fold. They asked many questions about the Gikhi, and Tom told them all he knew, and also about Zell and the miserable white man who had injured her.

Tom was thus more encouraged than ever. He was meeting with unexpected success, and he sped on his way with renewed energy. As the afternoon waned, and the sun went down, he became very weary. The excitement of the day, and the toilsome journey, were telling upon him. Every hill he faced seemed harder than the last, and his snow-shoes were becoming very heavy. But still he struggled forward, knowing that the encampment for which he was heading was not far away. There he would receive a hearty welcome, and obtain the needed rest and food.

At length the sound of voices fell upon his ears, and a light winged its way among the trees. Tom stopped abruptly, for what he heard filled him with apprehension. It was a confused babel of voices, telling plainly of serious trouble. Stepping quickly forward, he soon came in sight of the encampment, and in the shelter of the trees he stood for a few minutes and watched all that was taking place. He knew the meaning of the disorder only too well. Hootch was the cause, and he

saw two white men mingling with the crowd. Some of the Indians were quarrelling, others were shouting and singing, while several were lying in a helpless condition a short distance from the fire. Old and young were giving themselves up to this wild carousal which was making the night hideous. The white men alone seemed to be sober, and were exulting in the debauch for which they were responsible.

All this Tom noticed with disgust and burning indignation. At first he was tempted to turn away and leave the miserable creatures alone. But upon second thought he changed his mind. He needed refuge for the night, and he might be able to quell the revel, and bring the Indians to their senses. Surely the story he had to tell about the Gikhi would affect them.

As Tom stepped forward, beat off several snapping dogs, and made his way into the midst of the Indians, he was greeted with shouts of welcome. No one seemed to be surprised at the sight of the old man. Had they been sober, their curiosity would have been great. They crowded around him, offering him hootch, and when he refused to drink, they laughed and called him an old fool. Freeing himself, he entered the lodge and squatted down upon some blankets spread over fir boughs. He wanted to rest and to consider what he should do. But even here he was allowed no peace. Again and again he was urged to drink, and when each time he refused, the Indians became more insistent, and some quite angry. The white men, too, were determined in their efforts, and it was all that Tom could do to keep calm. He contrasted this wild confusion with the quiet and peaceful scene of the previous evening. What a difference, and how little chance was there for him to deliver his great message. He knew

that these excited people would not listen, and if they did, it would be only to ridicule him and the Gikhi. This was no place for him, so he concluded. He would leave them, build a fire some distance away, and there spend the night. Perhaps in the morning he would get a hearing.

Acting upon this impulse, he rose to his feet, and started to move away. But the natives had other views. They pulled him back with shouts of laughter. The embarrassment of the old man was affording them considerable sport. They would not let him go until they were through with him. But Tom's fighting blood was now aroused. In his younger days he had been a stern opponent, and although his body was weak through age, his spirit was just as strong as ever. His anger flared up at the sight of the two leering and amused white men. Why had his people been so deluded? Why did they not drive those foreigners from their midst?

With difficulty he struggled to his feet, and impatiently thrust away the ones who were crowding around him. His eyes were now blazing with indignation. He drew himself to his full height, and his stern, commanding figure somewhat awed the excited men and women. They stepped back, ceased their noise, and listened. In fiery language Tom told them of the days of old, and of their happy condition at The Gap before the coming of the demoralizing hootch. He turned his wrath upon the two white men. He told them what one of their number had done to the Gikhi and Zell, the half-breed girl. He thought that this would bring the Indians to their senses, and his eyes noted keenly the expressions upon the faces of those around him. In fact, he did detect signs of sympathy in several eyes. But it was merely a passing emotion, for the liquor had

too strong a hold upon them. Owing to the silence, he believed that he was really exerting some influence upon these people. But the entire effect of his oration was counteracted by a sneering laugh from one of the white men, followed by the words, "What is the old fool trying to say?" At this the young men burst into uproars of laughter in which most of the women joined. Tumult again broke forth, and when Tom tried once more to speak, he was jeered at, told to go back home and attend to his prayers. Stung to the quick by such taunts, Tom leaped forward and faced the nearest white man. Thinking that the Indian was going to attack him, the villain lifted his clenched fist and struck him a savage blow on the face.

"Take that, you d—— crazy fool and mind your own business," he cried.

Tom staggered back, stunned by the blow, tripped over a stick and fell heavily to the ground. He struck the side of his forehead against a stick, and in another minute blood was streaming down his right cheek. Picking himself up with difficulty, he wiped away the blood and gazed around in a dazed manner. Nothing but shouts of merriment greeted his woeful appearance, and no one came to his assistance. He was in the midst of his own people, but they had returned to the ways of the wild where sympathy is unknown, and where on the slightest pretext they would have rent him asunder.

Knowing now that further efforts would be all in vain, and wishing to be by himself, Tom moved slowly from the encampment. He was the dignified Indian once more, walking as erect as possible, paying no attention to the laughter and jibes which followed his departure. His forehead was sore, but much more so

was his heart. His bright hopes had all vanished, and he was an outcast. His own people would not listen to his message, preferring the ways of evil.

When some distance from the encampment, and beyond the sound of the revellers, he stopped, built a fire, spread a supply of fir boughs, and passed the night alone. No sleep came to his eyes as he squatted there thinking of all that had taken place. He knew how useless it would be to go back to those Indians in the morning. They would be either asleep, or more quarrelsome than ever owing to the effects of the liquor. They would not listen to him, anyway, so he believed. But he must have food, and the nearest place where this could be obtained was the police patrol-house miles away. He would go there, rest, and then make his way to the one more Indian encampment which he knew was beyond. Perhaps the Indians there might be willing to listen to him. He would try, anyway, even though they should reject his message.

Long before daylight he was once more on his way. He had eaten the last of his small supply of dried meat he had brought with him, and this strengthened him for the journey. He hoped to reach the patrol-house some time during the day, and there he would find rest and food. He thought little, however, about himself. It was his own people that worried him, and the condition of the Gikhi at The Gap.

Hour after hour he plodded steadily onward, up hill and down, through thick forests, across lakes, and long, sweeping wild meadows. He had travelled miles by the time the dawn of a new day dispelled the darkness of night, and the sun rose above the tops of the pointed trees. He followed no trail, and he needed none, for the region was familiar to him, and he was perfectly

at home in the trackless wild. He passed places where he had often camped in former days, and where he had set his traps. The old longing for the chase came upon him, and his eyes kindled when he came to a spot where he had killed a lordly moose or battled with a fierce grizzly. But he was on a greater quest now, so he could not afford to delay.

As the morning drew on to midday, Tom's steps began to lag. He was growing weary, and ere long he was forced at times to stop to rest. Lack of food and the excitement of the previous night were telling upon him. He knew that he had only a few miles more to go, so by carefully conserving his strength he should be able to reach the patrol-house. His indomitable spirit stood him in good stead now, so bravely he pressed forward.

The last mile proved the hardest of all, and his progress was exceptionally slow as he climbed another hill and paused on the summit. Down in the valley below was the police trail with the patrol-house nestling in the midst of a thicket of firs and jack-pines. Toward this he slowly moved, and at length the squat log shack appeared in sight. To his surprise he saw smoke issuing from the pipe stuck through the roof, telling him that there was someone ahead of him, and occupying the place. Perhaps the Police were there, and he hoped such was the case, as they would be of great service to him now.

Reaching at length the building, he kicked off his snow-shoes, pushed open the door and entered. The room was warm, and for a few seconds it seemed very dark. As he stood there, peering keenly around, a groan arrested his attention. Then a muttering sound came from the corner to the right of the stove. Tom stepped

quickly forward, and with his eyes now accustomed to the dimness of the room, he was enabled to see a form huddled in a bunk, covered with a single blanket. Bending low, he looked upon the man's face, and as he did so, he gave a start of surprise, and straightened himself quickly up. It was Bill, the Slugger!

CHAPTER 24

The Wages of Sin

FOR a few minutes Tom was at a loss as to what he should do. Two forces contended strongly within him. One clamored for revenge, the other for mercy. Here before him was an unscrupulous enemy, the man who had injured the half-breed girl, who had shot the Gikhi, and who, he was certain, had committed that terrible murder near the C. D. Cut-off. The spirit of his savage ancestors swept upon him, and for a while seemed to have the complete mastery. His eyes glowed, and his body trembled with intense excitement. He looked around for some weapon of destruction, and seeing a small axe lying on the floor, he sprang toward it, clutched it fiercely with both hands, and turned again toward the bunk. He had the axe raised, and in another instant it would have fallen, when with a great cry, he suddenly desisted, and flung the weapon with his full strength against the opposite side of the room. He then turned, rushed from the building, and stood outside, trembling in every limb. His brain was in a tumult, but he was slowly regaining his senses. The horror of the terrible deed he had almost committed possessed his soul. It was not a dread of the Law which affected him; in fact, he never thought of that. It was a greater Law which said "Thou shalt do no murder." There came to him the teaching of the missionary, and the words of the Master which he had

so often read in the little manual, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you." That was the Law he had almost broken in deed, and that he had broken it in spirit was a great grief to the old man. He was only an Indian, wrinkled, bent, and gray, an object of scorn to many white men had they seen him standing there. But the action of that native was worthy of the highest honour. He had met temptation in its most terrible form, and had almost fallen. But he had resisted, and won a remarkable victory. He had crushed back the spirit of revenge which was still strong upon him, and had submitted himself to the spirit of the Great Master. But still his grief was great. In his agony he dropped upon his knees in the snow, and lifted his hands above his head in an attitude of supplication. No sound did he utter, but his moving lips were more eloquent than many words. For a few minutes he remained in this position, silent and alone. The trees around him were the only witnesses to the humble worshipper mutely asking forgiveness from the Great Spirit of the universe. And to him it seemed that his request was granted, for a peace stole into his heart, and a weight was suddenly lifted from his mind.

At length he rose to his feet, and looked around. His eyes, which a short time ago had glowed with vengeance, now shone with the light of joy. His weariness was forgotten, and even his hunger as he re-entered the building to minister to the needs of the man lying upon the bunk. As he approached, Bill lifted his head and raised his right hand.

"What are you doing here, you devil?" he demanded. "Why don't you kill me an' git through with it?"

"Tom no keel Bill," was the quiet reply. "Tom no all sam' wolf now. Tom Clistin."

A bitter, sneering laugh came from the man in the bunk.

"You say you're a Christian, eh?" he queried. "Well, ye acted jist like one when ye started to brain me. Why didn't ye finish the job?"

"Gikhi an' good book tell no keel. Tom velly mad, heart bad when he see Bill. Something here," and he placed his hand to his breast, "tell Tom to keel white man. Tom almos' do it. Den somet'ing here say 'no keel.' Tom feel bad. Tom kneel in snow, pray, all sam' Gikhi."

Instead of admiring the native's candid confession of strength, and the influence of Christian teaching, Bill uttered a savage oath, told the Indian that religion was all bosh, and that the missionary at The Gap was a fraud and a hypocrite.

"The missionary is deceiving you," he said. "There is no heaven an' no hell. Religion is only fer kids, women, an' old fools like you. It is not meant fer big strong men."

"Gikhi good man," Tom defended. "Gikhi come to Gap when Injuns all bad, fight, keel. Gikhi show Injuns right trail. Gikhi tell Injuns 'bout Great Spirit."

"Yes, an' what has all his teaching amounted to? Have not the Injuns left him? They no longer listen to his teaching, but drink, gamble, an' strut around the streets when they go to town. The women an' girls go with white men, live with them, an' have babies. Why, I know of dozens of kids who will never know who their fathers are, an' their mothers don't know, either. Bah! what good has religion done?"

"'Ligion no do dat," Tom again stoutly maintained,

while his eyes gleamed with indignation. "Bad white man mak' Injun all sam' crazee. White man tote hootch, mak' Injun drunk. Gikhi no do dat."

Tom paused, stepped closer to the bunk, and looked keenly into Bill's face.

"Bill say 'ligion no good, eh?" he asked.

"That's what I said," was the reply. A groan of pain suddenly burst from his lips, followed by blood-curdling oaths.

"Stop dat," Tom sternly ordered.

The injured man looked up in surprise, and was somewhat awed by the Indian's manner.

"Why should I stop?" he asked. "I can swear an' curse if I want to. Religion means nothing to me. I'm not afraid of hell."

"Bill no 'fraid of hell, eh? Bill no like pain. Bill cry all sam' babee. Bill cry more bimeby, mebbe."

"What do you mean?"

"Tom leave Bill, mebbe. Tom go 'way. Bill no want Tom. Bill die, eh?"

It was not difficult for the white man to understand the meaning of these words. He believed that the Indian meant what he said, and the thought of being left there alone was terrible. He recalled the past night of suffering and despair when he had writhed in agony of body and mind. The swelling in his foot was most menacing, and was steadily creeping upwards until his whole leg from foot to hip was badly inflamed. He felt that there was nothing that could relieve him, but he did not want to be alone. It was some consolation to have some one with him, even though it was only an Indian.

"Don't leave me," he cried, reaching out his right

hand as if to grasp and hold the native. "Fer God's sake, stay here an' don't let me die alone!"

Tom's eyes brightened as he turned them intently upon the pleading man before him. This was more than he had expected.

"Tom no leave Bill," he replied. "Tom Clistin. Wan tam Tom no Clistin, leave Bill to die, keel heem, mebbe. Now, Tom all sam' Gikhi, good to Bill."

"Oh, shut up about yer religion," the suffering man snapped. "I'm sick of it. Git me something to eat. That'll do me more good than all your yangin' about religion. Ye've gone daft over it."

"Ah, ah, Tom geeve Bill grub," was the quiet reply. "But Tom ask Bill wan t'ing, eh?"

"Well, what is it? Out with it. I'm hungry."

"Bill no say bad word. Bill no talk 'bout 'ligion. Bill keep still."

This was more than Bill was inclined to do, so he gave expression to his feeling in a string of oaths. Tom listened for only a few seconds, when he suddenly turned, left the side of the bunk, and started for the door. Seeing that he was about to leave, the injured man realised his mistake, and yelled for him to come back. Tom hesitated before complying with this request. He then slowly retraced his steps and once again stood looking down upon the white man.

"Bill call, eh?" he simply asked.

"Yes, I did. Don't go an' I'll hold my tongue, an' say nuthin' more about religion. Hurry up an' git me something to eat."

"Good, good," the Indian grunted. "Tom git grub now."

Tom at once turned his attention to the stove. There was still some fire in the battered sheet-iron heater, so

he added a few dry sticks lying near. He found that Bill had done some cooking, and examining several cans near the stove he was pleased to learn that they contained cooked rice and dried fruit, while part of a loaf of sour-dough bread was lying on a biscuit box close at hand. Tom warmed some of the rice, cut a few slices of bread, which he spread with a liberal covering of jam from a recently opened tin. These he carried to the white man, and placed the plate upon the bunk.

"Eat," he said, "Grub good, eh?"

"It's nuthin' but trash," Bill growled as he took a little of the food. "Lord! I wish I had a good swig of hootch. That would put new life into me. But there's not a drop anywhere in this hole."

"Too much hootch in Injun camp," Tom replied. "Bad white man mak' Injun all sam' crazee. Tom hurt, see?" and he placed his hand to his face.

"Who did that?" Bill asked.

"Jeree, white man. Plenty hootch. Jeree mad; hit Tom."

"Where was that?"

"Injun camp, off dere," and Tom motioned south.

"Was there another white man with Jerry?"

"Ah, ah, no savvey name. Beeg, bad face, all sam' wolf."

"Where did they come from?"

"Me no savvey."

This information excited Bill, and he became very impatient. Once he scrambled out of the bunk, but so intense was the pain in his leg that he groaned in agony.

"I must git away from here," he cried when Tom urged him to lie down again and be still. "This is too

dangerous a place fer me. Git me my snow-shoes, an' put me up some grub. There's a hard trail ahead, an' I must be off."

In another minute, however, he was glad to be back again in the bunk. He moaned, cursed, and lamented his hard luck. His eyes expressed a nameless fear, and often he looked anxiously toward the door.

"Did you see the Police?" he at length asked. "Are they near?"

"Ah, ah; P'lice at Gap."

"They are!" Bill suddenly raised himself on his right shoulder. "Are they coming this way? Do they know where I am? Does anybody know?"

"Ah, ah, Tom savvey."

"I know ye do, ye fool. But does anybody else?"

"Me no savvey. P'lice savvey much, eh?"

"They do," was the savage reply. "They are devils."

The short afternoon was rapidly wearing away as the wretched man tossed and writhed in his hard bunk. He became consumed with a burning thirst, and called continually for water. Tom was kept busy melting snow, and then placing the water outside to cool. Cup after cup he carried to the restless patient, who would seize it, drain it to the bottom, and demand more.

When night shut down, Bill became delirious, and it was only with difficulty that the native could keep him in the bunk. He talked and shouted almost incessantly, and Tom was shocked at many of the things he said. If formerly he had any doubt about this man being the one who had committed that terrible deed at the C. D. Cut-Off, it was now entirely removed. The man lived it all over again, as well as other deeds of infamy. Time and time again he would start up and look wildly around, his eyes dilated with fear.

"Keep back!" he would cry. "Let me go! Let me go! Don't put me under the ice! Bill Haines an' his wife are there, an' they'll kill me, oh, oh!"

He talked, too, about Tim, and how he knew too much. He raved about Zell, the half-breed girl, and how he wanted her.

"I'll git ye," he shouted. "Tim won't have ye. I'll fix him."

He then gave utterance to expressions which further revealed the baseness of his nature, and which Tom found hard to endure.

Thus all through the long night the man tossed and raved. Tom was very weary, and longed to sleep. But he did not dare to close his eyes. When he was not forcing Bill back into the bunk, he squatted near the stove and smoked his old blackened pipe. Although his body was tired, his mind was very active. He wondered what he should do with the sick white man. That it was his duty to stay by his side he was certain. But how was he to get word to that outlying band of Indians? It was necessary that they should be told of the condition of the Gikhi, that they might have a chance to return with the other natives who had avowed their loyalty. But he was helpless to do anything.

At times Tom went to the door, opened it and looked out. It was a cold night, and the Northern Lights were making a wonderful display. The stars, too, were exceptionally thick and bright. There was no moon, but with such lights in the heavens the night was not dark. All was still, save for the occasional snap of a frost-rent tree, or the distant howl of a lone wolf.

Thus hour after hour Tom kept his weary watch, while the man in the bunk tossed, fretted, and revealed his past life of shame.

CHAPTER 25

“Maintien le Droit”

IT was evening, and Sergeant North and Constable Rolfe were travelling fast. They had been on the way since early morning, and were anxious to reach the next band of Indians, where they were planning to stay all night. They were not following the regular police trail, but visiting the various Indian camps instead, hoping in this manner to obtain some word about Bill, the Slugger, and perhaps overtake him. They believed that he could not travel far, judging from what they had heard about the injury he had received. So far they had learned nothing, but that did not discourage them. They had often followed after men and overtaken them with far less to work upon. This undertaking appeared easy in comparison with some they had experienced in the past.

Sergeant North was anxious to get through with the job as soon as possible that he might hurry back to Marion. It was hard for him to leave her at The Gap with the unconscious missionary. He wanted to remain with her. But his duty was out in the hills, so nothing must interfere with his loyalty to the Force. He had a reasonable excuse for delaying a day or two, at the least. Some men who had come through such hardships would have rested before venturing forth again. As he swung on his way, up hill and down, with the constable close at his heels, Marion was almost

constantly in his mind. He thought of her standing at the door of the mission house bidding them good-by. How beautiful she looked then, although her eyes were misty, and her voice trembled as she tried to be brave and smile a cheery farewell. He had stooped and kissed her right before the constable, and he did not know that the latter's heart was strangely stirred. He, too, longed for someone to care for him as Marion did for the sergeant. He envied North his good fortune, but it was envy robbed of all sting and malice. But away from The Gap his buoyant spirit once more gained the mastery, and he was apparently as light-hearted as ever. He joked, sang snatches of songs, and quoted poetry to his heart's content. North, if he heard, paid no attention to his companion, so completely wrapped up was he in his own affairs.

The first night they encamped with the band of Indians who had given Tom such a warm welcome. These natives had heard nothing about the presence of any white man in the hills. They were enthusiastic over the idea of returning to The Gap, and asked the police numerous questions about the Gikhi. The visitors listened with much interest to the Indian service that night, which was conducted by the oldest native present. The constable's face showed his approval, and his eyes sparkled with animation. The sergeant, on the other hand, expressed no outward sign. But he was doing considerable thinking, and his heart was stirred more than usual. He made no comment then, but the next day while resting and eating a cold lunch, he turned suddenly to his companion, who was seated on a fallen log by his side.

"Say, Tom," he began, "I've been thinking much to-day about that Indian service last night."

“Is that so? Going to put a stop to it, eh? You shouldn’t allow such superstitious practices to be carried on. They might do harm to the natives, you know.”

“No, I’m going to do nothing of the kind, Tom. And besides, I have not the power. And I don’t want to stop them. I have been greatly impressed of late by what I have seen, and am beginning to look at certain things in a different light.”

“Experiencing a change of heart?” the constable asked, looking quizzically at the sergeant. “Isn’t it coming to you rather late?”

“Not too late, I hope,” was the quiet reply. “I am afraid that my judgment of things pertaining to religion has been too much biased, and a one-sided affair. I have been going upon the idea that religion is all right in theory, but of little use in daily life. I see now that I was wrong.”

“What has led you to change your mind?”

“Oh, several things. The first, and perhaps the most important, was the thought of that old missionary giving up his life on behalf of the Indians, and standing bravely at his post of duty when deserted by nearly all of his flock. Why, Tom, that man is a great hero, and yet the world knows nothing about him. I could hardly keep back the tears at something I saw upon his rough table. Marion saw it, too, and she was deeply affected.”

“What was it, sergeant? It must have been something out of the ordinary to move such a hardened being as you.”

“It was the last bit of writing, I believe, that he did. His Bible was lying open on the table, with a sheet of paper right near, on which were some words in the Indian language. I did not know what they were, but

'Zell could read them, and what do you suppose they were?'

"I could never guess."

"They were words of the Great Master Himself, and they have fairly burned themselves into my mind and soul. I had often heard them before, but thought little about them. But to see them there in that strange language, written with a trembling hand, and with an old rusted pen, stirred something within me which I can never forget."

"What were they?" the constable asked, now deeply impressed by the sergeant's earnest tone.

"Wonderful words about love which the Master was imparting to his disciples. 'This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' Now, what do you think of that? The last words penned by that old saint for his wandering flock. And he lived them, too; that is what affected me so deeply. His love was so great that he actually laid down his life for the Indians."

The sergeant paused and looked off among the trees. The constable watched him somewhat curiously, completely surprised at the change which had come over his leader. He admired him, too, and longed to tell him so. But before he could frame suitable words, the sergeant continued:

"And think of the influence that missionary exerted over the natives. They were wild savages when he first came among them, so I have been told. He changed their entire manner of living, and until base white men began to demoralize them they lived at peace and we had not the slightest trouble with them. It was a sad

day when those wretched hootch peddlers began their diabolical work. I believe the natives want to follow the teaching of their missionary, and are anxious to return to The Gap. They are naturally religious by nature. Did you notice last night how reverent and attentive they were during that simple service?”

“Indeed I did,” the constable emphatically declared. “I was thinking of what Longfellow said in his ‘Hiawatha’ about Indians. Did you ever hear it?”

“Not that I know of. More poetry, I suppose.”

“Yes, but great poetry, and it expresses fully what was in my mind. Longfellow says:

“ ‘That in even savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings,
For the good they comprehend not,
That the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God’s right hand in that darkness,
And are lifted up and strengthened.’

“Now, isn’t that beautiful? I could quote you a great deal more from ‘Hiawatha,’ though I advise you to read it yourself when you get a chance. I can’t understand why you have not read it already.”

“For want of the proper poetic gift, I suppose, and because the whole of my life has been lived in the open. But I like those words, especially about feeble hands touching God’s hand in the darkness. I guess that applies to me as well as to the Indians. But, there, we have delayed here too long, so must get on our way.”

This conversation took place at midday, and all through the afternoon the two men sped rapidly forward. They had little to impede their march, for they carried only light packs, and their revolvers. They

could turn aside whenever they wished and obtain extra food from the patrol house.

When about a mile from the Indian encampment they were surprised at the sight of a man just ahead, staggering along, and moaning as if in pain. Coming closer they saw that he was a white man, known to them as Jerry, a squaw-man, who lived in a small shack along the river. He stopped, straightened somewhat up and exhibited much fear at the sight of the policemen.

"What's the matter with you?" the sergeant asked.

"The devils are after me!" was the gasping answer. "They'll kill me! For God's sake, keep them back till I git out of this!"

"Who are after you?"

"The Injuns. They've gone crazy. Been wild all day. Me pardner is killed, I guess."

"Who's that?"

"Bob Span," the man replied, turning his head and looking fearfully back. "They set upon us like wolves, an' I jist managed to git away."

"What are you doing here, anyway?" the sergeant sternly asked.

"Trappin', of course. Happened to stay last night with them Injuns, an' was jist leavin' when they set upon us. Don't let 'em git me."

The sergeant shot a swift glance toward the constable, and then laid a strong hand upon the frightened man.

"You've been selling hootch to the Indians," he charged.

"No, no!" the man denied. "I was jist trappin'. Let me go."

"Quit your lying," the sergeant ordered. "Do you

think I'm fool enough to believe what you say? You will go with us, and I warn you not to make any trouble."

"Where are ye goin' to take me?" the man asked.

"Back from where you came, of course."

"No, no; not there! The Injuns will kill me like they did me pardner."

"Oh, we'll attend to that. Come, we haven't any time to lose."

Seeing that the sergeant meant business and that further words would be useless, Jerry did as he was ordered. He was well worn out through fear and lack of sleep, so he tottered as he groped his way along. At last the policemen were forced to help him, each taking an arm, and thus they moved slowly along. At times Jerry wailed and sobbed. He vowed that the Indians would kill him as soon as they saw him. Once he dropped upon the snow and refused to go a step farther. It was only when North threatened to leave him there, and let the Indians come and deal with him, that he could be induced to go on. He was well aware that his only hope now lay with these hardy guardians he had so often eluded.

It was dark by the time the Indian encampment was reached, and there all was excitement and wild talking. Men, women, and children sprang to their feet as the policemen approached, dragging along their terrified prisoner. The natives advanced threateningly toward Jerry, but a stern warning from North caused them to hesitate and draw back. They recognised the sergeant and the constable as men who would stand no nonsense. They knew of them not only by report but through personal experience in the towns and on the trails. They had always held them in high regard and special

awe, knowing that they and all the men of the Force would carry out their duties to the letter. Now, however, it was different. The natives were mad and half-crazed with bad hootch, and they were ready to cast discretion to the winds. What could two lone men do against an overwhelming number? This was the thought that ran through the minds of several daring young natives. They had easily disposed of the two hootch peddlers, and this made them venturesome and impudent. They wished to show the rest of the Indians that they were not afraid of the policemen.

Acting upon the impulse of the moment, one of their number uttered a few words in the native tongue, sprang forward, and laid hold upon the cringing Jerry. He was followed by several of his companions, and Jerry was being lifted off his feet when the sergeant took a hand. Whipping out his revolver, he sternly ordered the Indians to drop their burden. As they paid no heed, the next instant the revolver spoke, and the right arm of the leader dropped to his side. With a yell of pain and rage the man staggered back, leaving his companions to complete the task. But they had no relish now for the undertaking, for the sergeant was standing silently there with his finger slightly pressing the trigger, and by his side was the constable, with drawn revolver, ready to follow his leader's example. Quickly the natives deposited the terrified Jerry upon the ground and leaped back among the rest of the Indians who were standing defiantly near.

Seeing that for a time the rebels were quelled, the sergeant thrust back his revolver into its holster, stepped forward, and drew back Jerry to his side. His eyes then roamed deliberately over the silent band before him. He was well aware that he had to use extreme

caution now, as the least mistake on his part might prove fatal. But his experience with the Indians covered a number of years, so he was no novice in dealing with them. Had he hesitated at the outset, and shown the least sign of fear, the entire band would have been upon him and the constable like howling wolves.

“Let us be friends,” he at length began. “We come here to help you and not to fight. These men who carry hootch harm you. We want to do you good, and save you from them. You could easily kill me and my companion here. But it would be very bad for you. Other men would take our place, and, if necessary, they would be followed by others as many as the trees of the forest. You could not fight them. But we do not want to fight. Let us talk this matter over, and be at peace with one another.”

Having finished, the sergeant moved forward, and sat down calmly near the fire. The constable followed his example, and there the two waited to see what would happen next. Although the Indians did not understand all the words that were said, they grasped their meaning, and at once began to talk to one another in the most animated manner. At length they drew back, ranged themselves in a circle around the fire, some standing, while others squatted upon the snow.

At last the leader arose and asked the sergeant why there were two laws in the country, one for the Indians and another for the white people. Why were not the Indians allowed the same liberty as their white brothers? The land belonged to the Indians, as it had been handed down to them from their fathers. Why could they not drink hootch if they wanted to do so? They did not think that the white man’s laws were fair. The strangers had come into their country, were

killing their game, and driving the natives farther and farther back into the hills. Soon there would be no place left for them.

The sergeant was well aware of these old complaints, so he was not surprised to hear them again. He was wise enough not to attempt to answer them directly, as it would only involve him in a lengthy argument, for which he was not at all inclined. He merely told the Indians that what their leader said was only too true. But the Police were in the country to protect them from bad white men, and to save their young men and women. If they obeyed the laws it would be for their good, and no harm would come to them. He then drew a picture of their happy condition at The Gap when the missionary was their teacher, guide, and friend.

"Were you not happier then?" he asked. "Were you not all like one big family? But what has happened? Your teacher has been shot by a bad white man, and he may be dead now. He gave up his life for the Indians, and his every thought was for you. He was always praying that you might come back to him again. Let us now forget all strife and think only of him who is lying wounded in his house at The Gap. Suppose we have a little service here, and pray to the Lord to spare the missionary. That will do more good than quarrelling."

This suggestion was carefully considered by the natives. Although he did not know what was being said, yet the sergeant could tell that several of the young men opposed the idea. But the will of the majority prevailed, and it was not long ere many of the natives were holding in their hands copies of the

little manual which they had unearthed from most unlikely places.

“The white man’s words are good,” the leader said, turning toward the sergeant. “The Indians will pray for the Gikhi. Mebbe the Lord will not let the Gikhi die.”

Then at a word the natives all dropped upon their knees while the leader began to pray in the native tongue. At times all joined in, and from their earnest tones it was quite evident that they meant what they said.

Rising at length from their knees, they began to sing an old familiar hymn. This ended, they sang another, and still another. Their enthusiasm was now intense. It had been months since they had held such a service, and their hearts were all deeply stirred. When at last they paused to rest, some were anxious to start right away that very night for The Gap, but others advised waiting until morning before beginning the journey.

While they were discussing this, the other hootch peddler sneaked into their midst and stood before the fire. He was shivering with cold and his face was scarred and bleeding. The Indians made no attempt to molest the miserable creature, but left him to the sergeant.

“Where have you been?” the latter asked.

“Out in the woods, freezin’,” was the gasping reply. “I would have died if you hadn’t come along. Say, these Indians are devils.”

“Who made them devils?” the sergeant sternly asked. “You did,” he continued, receiving no reply. “You and your partner brought in your hootch-poison, and it’s a wonder they didn’t kill you.”

"They tried to. Oh, Lord! I thought it was all up with me."

"It's too bad it wasn't for the sake of others. But the Indians won't harm you now, and you have that noble missionary at The Gap to thank for it."

"Why, where does he come in on this?" the man asked in surprise. "I thought it was yer guns, an' the hell-fear the Police have put into the hearts of the Injuns."

"Oh, that had something to do with it, I suppose. But unless these Indians had been taught the difference between right and wrong, what could two of us have done with this bunch? No, it was mainly due to the teaching they received, and don't you forget that. We've been on your trail for some time, and would have caught you sooner or later. We've got you now, and intend to hold on to you."

With peace thus restored, the sergeant and the constable were able to rest. The Indians supplied them liberally with food, and gave them a comfortable place to sleep. They were tired out after their strenuous exertions, but thankful for what had happened. As the sergeant lay upon the robes spread over a wealth of fir boughs, he thought of Marion and wondered how she was making out. He went to sleep with her in his mind and heart, and did not hear the constable repeating one of his favorite verses:

"God bless the man who first invented sleep,
So Sancho Panza said and so say I.
And bless him, also, that he didn't keep
His great discovery to himself, nor try
To make it, as the lucky fellow might—
A close monopoly by patent right."

CHAPTER 26

The Night Struggle

THE Golden Horn was agleam with the rising sun as the two policemen left the Indian encampment the next morning and headed for the patrol house. They were late in starting, owing to the arrangements they had to make in connection with the two hootch peddlers. At first it seemed as if the constable would have to conduct them to The Gap, leaving the sergeant to obtain a native to go with him. The matter was at length settled by several Indians agreeing to take the prisoners all the way to Kynox. The sergeant told them that they would be well rewarded if they delivered the two men to the police stationed at that post.

So once more the upholders of the law and the guardians of life sped along through the wilderness. For a while there was nothing to guide them. Then they came upon Tom's trail, and this they followed. They had heard about the old Indian's visit to the encampment, and the harsh reception which had been meted out to him. They surmised that he had made his way to the patrol house for shelter and food.

"Say, sergeant," Rolfe remarked, as they paused to rest on the summit of a hill they had just climbed, "I wonder if the Wandering Jew had any children."

"I never heard that he did," was the reply. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I have come to the conclusion that he did,

and that we are two of his descendants. We are ever wandering from place to place, and have been doing so for years. It seems to be our fate. I am getting more than tired of this life."

"Longing for a change, eh?"

"It wouldn't come amiss, let me tell you that."

"But we're getting plenty of change, Tom. Ever since we left Kynox haven't we had no end of excitement, ending up with that racket last night?"

"Do you call that the end? It looks to me like only the beginning. But, then, let us keep up courage; the worst is yet to come. Say, sergeant, I've been thinking."

"I'm glad to hear it, Tom. Rather unusual, isn't it?"

"Perhaps so, but I really have. I've been thinking about all the people who sing the national anthem in cities and towns."

"Does your brain hurt from such deep thinking?"

"I wonder if they realize what our motto, 'Maintien le Droit,' really means? Look at us, for instance, upholding the right, and enforcing the King's laws, while all they do is sing, cheer, and wave the flag. When I get out of the Force, I'm going to write something that will open their eyes."

"Poetry, I suppose. Will people read it?"

"They will have to. I shall write such blazing stuff that everyone will want to read it. It will not be the trash that is so often seen in print."

"I wish you good luck, old man," North replied, as he lifted his small pack and slung it once again over his shoulders. "But I wouldn't be too hopeful. People, as a rule, don't take kindly to poetry."

"But they will take to mine. I shall write such stuff that they won't be able to help themselves. Now, some

poets have written about this country who have never been on its trails. I shall write from experience, and surely people will see the difference."

"Let us hope so, Tom," the sergeant replied. "But come, let us get on our way. We have lost too much time already. If you can find any poetry in all this, you are heartily welcome to it."

Hour after hour they moved onward, and the sun had disappeared behind the far-off mountain peaks as they came at last to the patrol house. Smoke was pouring forth from the pipe stuck up through the roof. This did not surprise them, for they surmised that Tom, the Indian, was making himself at home within. Kicking off their snow-shoes, the sergeant thrust open the door and led the way into the building. He stopped suddenly, however, at a strange and uncanny sound which came from the opposite corner of the room. He could not see clearly, owing to the dimness of the place, but words he heard quickened the blood in his veins, and caused him to grip hard the constable's arm.

"Keep back! Keep back!" wailed the terrified voice. "What are ye doin' here, Bill Haines? How did ye git out of the river? I put you an' yer wife under the ice, an' how did ye git out? Oh! oh! oh! keep yer wet hands off my throat. Yer chokin' me! Fer God's sake, let me go!"

As the wretched, haunted creature paused an instant for breath, the sergeant stepped quickly forward. Indian Tom was standing by the bunk, and he turned around as the sergeant approached. He expressed no surprise at the arrival of the policeman, although it was evident he was greatly relieved.

"Bill velly seek," he simply said. "Bill talk all sam' crazee. Bill tell much."

"He certainly does," the sergeant replied, as he again listened to the wild words of the man before him, pleading again with Bill Haines to keep back and not to choke him. He was certain now that the murderer he was seeking had been found, and that the search was ended.

"How long has Bill been talking like this?" he asked.

"Long tam, all day, mebbe. Bill velly seek. Bill die bimeby, eh?"

"Most likely," was the reply. "Anyway, he's worse than dead now. Isn't it terrible to listen to him?" and he turned to the constable.

"Say, sergeant, he's getting his hell now," Rolfe replied. "It's the mind that makes the torment. It was Satan in 'Paradise Lost' which said, 'The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a hell of heaven.' And who can doubt it after listening to the ravings of such a creature as that? Why, he's living over again all the devilish things he has ever done. There he goes again about the murder of Bill Haines and his wife. Did you hear him speak about a ring? Look, he's groping for something. What do you suppose it can be?"

"Perhaps he's stolen one," the sergeant suggested. "But, stay; do you suppose a ring was the cause of that murder? If so, he may have it somewhere about him. Give me a light, and let me examine him."

In another minute a candle was lighted which enabled them to see much better. The pockets of the raving man were searched, and from one the sergeant at length brought forth the ring, and held it up for inspection. The diamond gleamed beneath the rays of light and fascinated the eyes of the beholders.

"Isn't it a beauty!" the constable exclaimed. "What

in the world was Bill doing with a thing like that? It may be, as you suggest, the cause of the murder. Did you ever hear of the Haines having such a valuable thing?"

"I never did. They always seemed too poor to possess anything like that. But, then, one can never tell. Bill Haines and his wife were very reserved people, and although friendly and hospitable to all, they kept their own affairs to themselves. Mrs. Haines was a refined woman, and it often struck me as strange that she should be willing to live year after year in such a lonely place along the river. However, we shall keep this ring; it may be the means of unravelling some mystery. The question now for us is what to do with this crazy creature. But first of all, get something to eat, as I am almost starved."

While the constable was preparing supper, North sat by the side of the bunk, watching the unhappy man lying there, and listening to his incessant ravings. It was a sordid tale, unconsciously unfolded, and the sergeant was enabled to piece together much of his unenviable record. Tom, the Indian, squatted on the floor nearby, silent and alert. At times the sergeant glanced toward him and wondered what was passing through his mind. When the humble meal had been eaten, the Indian filled, lighted his old blackened pipe, and smoked for a while in silence. At last he rose to his feet and stood before the sergeant.

"Me go now," he simply announced. "P'lice stay, eh?"

"Go where?" North asked in surprise. "Surely you are not going away to-night!"

"Ah, ah. Tom go find Injun. Fetch Injun back to Gap. Savvey?"

"What for?"

"Gikhi velly seek; die mebbe. Tom fetch Injun."

"But why not wait until morning? Sleep first."

"Tom sleep bimeby. Ketch Injun first."

"How far away are the Indians?" the sergeant asked.

"At Big Lake."

"That's about ten miles, isn't it?"

"Ah, ah, ten mile, mebbe."

For a few minutes the sergeant remained in thought. He then turned to the constable, who was cleaning up after supper.

"Say, Tom," he began, "we've got to get this crazy man back to The Gap, and from there to Kynox. We can't do it without a team of dogs. Those Indians at Big Lake must supply us with an outfit. One of us should go with this Indian and pick up a good team. Would you rather go or stay here with Bill?"

"Go with the Indian, of course," was the emphatic reply. "I'd soon be crazy, too, if I had to stay here alone with that raving villain."

"But you might obtain great material for poetry," the sergeant bantered. "What brilliant ideas might come to you sitting here and listening to Bill."

"I'd rather be excused this time, sergeant. Dante wrote wonderful things about his imaginary visit to Hell, but I don't think that I could. This is too real to inspire the poetic muse. No, I prefer the trail every time."

"Even though you have to start right off now?"

"I would rather wait until morning, there is no doubt about that. But if Old Tom is determined to go now, I suppose it can't be helped. And besides, perhaps he is right. There is no time to lose. We must get that

creature out of this as soon as possible. And you want to get back to The Gap as soon as you can, don't you?"

The sergeant made no reply. He was more than anxious to be with Marion once more. He had worried a great deal about her, and wondered how she was making out with the missionary. She was very much in his mind as he sat near the bunk after the Indian and the constable had left. He had plenty of time to think, as there was nothing else he could do. Marion always brought before him a vision of purity and nobleness. He pictured a time when his wanderings on the cruel trails would be ended, and he would have a snug little home of his own, with Marion as the beautiful presiding genius. What happiness that would be. No more wanderings to and fro, with no certain abiding place.

It was but natural that he should also think of the self-sacrificing life of Charles Norris, the missionary at The Gap, and the sad fate which had fallen upon him. He mused upon his noble life, and the peaceful expression upon his face as he had last seen him lying so still in the mission house. He compared him with the wretched being before him, and the contrast was most startling. One had lived for loving service; the other for self. The aim of one had been to build up, and improve; that of the other to tear down, and to destroy. In the end both had been terribly stricken down. That the good should suffer as well as the bad the sergeant knew was one of the great problems of life. And yet not for an instant could he imagine the missionary at The Gap undergoing such tortures of the condemned as he beheld in Bill, the Slugger. In the latter he saw the brute nature, revealed and uncontrolled, pouring forth the vile pollutions of the mind. He realised now,

as he had never done before, the gracious and refining influence of the life and teaching of the Great Master. He had scoffed at such things in the past, but face to face with such stern realities, he knew that he could never do so again.

Thus hour after hour he kept watch, tended the fire, and listened to the sounds of the man in the bunk, which were now nothing more than senseless jabberings. Occasionally he went to the door and looked out. The night was cold, and he thought of the constable and the Indian speeding through the forest. He was thankful to have a warm abode, even though his sole companion was a demented man.

Once more he took up his position near the bunk, filled and lighted his pipe, and leaned back against the wall. When he had finished his smoke, he laid aside his pipe and looked at Bill. He was quiet now, and to all appearance asleep. North was glad of this, for he was becoming very drowsy. The room was warm and as he once more resumed his seat, he leaned his head against one of the bunk posts which was fastened to the wall. He was tired, and although he intended to keep awake, yet in a few minutes he was asleep.

He awoke with a start, overwhelmed with a feeling of dread. And none too soon, for before him was the lunatic creeping toward him with a stick of firewood raised ready to strike.

North sprang to his feet as the madman leaped forward and with a wild cry struck. Warding the blow with his right hand, the sergeant grappled with the raging demon. Then ensued a struggle such as North had never before experienced. The lunatic seemed to be possessed of superhuman strength, and several times he was on the point of gaining the mastery. To and

fro the contestants swayed and reeled. The madman's arms were like coils of steel as he wound them about his adversary's body. His eyes glowed like red-hot coals. His teeth ground together in his insensate rage, and blood-curdling yells poured from his frothing lips. North had at times heard of the terrible strength of crazy men and their marvellous endurance. But he knew it now only too well. Possessed of great strength himself, and with finely developed muscles, he was weak compared with his raging brute antagonist. He felt his strength weakening in the terrible grip, and a sickening feeling of helplessness swept upon him. The thought of being overpowered by such a demon was maddening. He could not subdue him by mere physical force, that was quite evident, so in extremity desperate means must be used. At the first opportunity he drew back his right arm and struck his opponent a smashing blow on the left jaw. The effect was instantaneous. The encircling arms relaxed, the gripping fingers loosened their strangling hold, the tense body sagged, and then dropped in a heap upon the floor.

North staggered back weak and faint after the fray, and leaned for a few seconds against the wall. He was well aware, however, that the madman might speedily recover and rush again to the attack. Such a thing must be prevented. He looked around for a rope or strap, but seeing nothing, he seized one of the grey blankets upon the bunk and quickly tore off a long narrow strip. Turning over the prostrate man, he securely fastened his hands behind his back. With another strip he also tied his feet together. This done, he threw over him a couple of blankets, and left him upon the floor.

"Lie there, you brute," he said. "It's too good a

place for you. I'm not going to bother with you any more. You don't deserve the least consideration. You brought all this trouble upon yourself. I wish that some of your choice companions could see you now. It might be a lesson to them."

Slowly the long night wore away. North was very tired, but he did not dare to sleep. He kept the fire going and waited impatiently for the coming of dawn. The madman at length recovered, struggled to free himself, and yelled and raved. North left him alone, knowing that he could do nothing for him. His one desire now was to get him back to The Gap as soon as possible, and from there to Kynox. His responsibility then would be ended.

CHAPTER 27

An Unfolded Record

MARION BRISBANE was kept very busy for some time after the sergeant and the constable had left. The mission house was in sad need of attention. With the aid of the Indian woman she set to work upon the main room, swept, dusted, and scrubbed the floor. This took all day, and at night she was very tired. But the place looked the better for the cleaning, and she viewed it with considerable satisfaction.

"That is the first thorough cleaning it has had for some time, it seems to me," she declared.

"It used to be clean," Zell replied. "When Mrs. Norris was living she was very particular. I often helped her, and so did the other girls. We always liked to do it for her, as she was so good and kind."

"She must have been a noble woman, Zell. I suppose you miss her."

The girl rose from her seat and moved slowly across the room. She was still weak, and walked with difficulty. She stopped before a little table, above which were several shelves, filled with books, papers, letters, and writing material.

"This is where she so often sat and wrote," she said. "I can see her now sitting here while we were at our lessons. She would read and write, and every morning she would kneel here while the Gikhi had prayers. I am afraid that we didn't pay much attention to what

was being said. We were all too silly, thinking about other things. I guess you understand, Miss, what girls of our age generally think about."

"Did the missionary and his wife know anything about your thoughts?" Marion asked.

"Oh, no. They never dreamed of such things. They lived too near heaven for that. Perhaps that was where they made a mistake in thinking that the girls were like themselves. Anyway, they were right, and we were wrong. I see it now, when it is too late."

Zell's eyes were misty as she stood there, resting her left hand upon the table for support. Marion, too, was affected, as in her mind she saw a faithful woman, who had given up all the luxuries of life for a great cause, seated there or kneeling in prayer. What earnest petitions had been offered up before that rude table, and how many letters had been written to loved ones far away. The thought of that noble woman was an inspiration to her, and helped her to be brave. Stepping forward, she glanced at the books upon the shelves. She examined several, and was surprised to find them all stained as if with water.

"What happened to these?" she asked. "They look as if they had been soaked."

"Oh, the big flood did that," Zell explained. "It was one spring several years ago, when the Kluksan was jammed up in the mountains with ice. It broke and swept down upon The Gap in a rushing torrent. The Gikhi was sitting at his table writing, when an Indian rushed in and gave the warning. We had only time to get out of the house and flee to the high bank when the water was in this house, and almost everything was ruined. The Indians' cabins were all swept away, while only the mission house and church were left

standing. You see, Miss, God wouldn't let the flood hurt them. That's what the Indians said, and I guess they were right. But they have forgotten about it, though," she added with a sigh.

"Does a flood like that happen often?" Marion asked.

"It was the first one in a long time. The old Indians said there was another many years ago, when they were little."

"They must have had a hard time building their houses again."

"Indeed they did. The women and children slept in the church, and the men made lean-tos. They built new cabins on higher ground, as you can see for yourself."

Marion did not really hear these last words, as she was holding in her hands another book she had taken from one of the shelves. It was different from the others, and much of it was written with a lead pencil. She began to read, and became so interested that for a time she forgot everything else. It was an account of the founding of the mission at The Gap, the coming of the missionaries to the place, their struggles and the opposition of the Medicine Men. Although there was no name, she was certain that it had been written by Mrs. Norris. What a treasure it was, and what a pity that it had remained hidden for such a length of time. She longed to read more, but she was aroused by Zell's voice.

"The Gikhi! The Gikhi!" she exclaimed, pointing to the bedroom. "He is calling!"

Laying aside the book, Marion hastened across the room, pushed open the door, which had been kept partly closed owing to the housecleaning, and looked in. To her astonishment she saw the missionary sitting up

in bed and staring straight before him. Going swiftly to his side, she spoke to him, and the sound of her voice attracted his attention. He turned his eyes toward her, and reached out his right hand. This Marion grasped, and the expression which overspread the old man's face told of his satisfaction.

"Where have you been, dear?" he asked. "I thought you were never coming."

"Just outside," Marion replied, somewhat startled at the word of endearment. "But come, lie down again. You must not tire yourself."

"Have the Indians come back yet?" the man asked, unheeding her words. "It will be Christmas soon, and we must give them a good time."

"He thinks you are his wife," Zell whispered, as she stood by the nurse's side. "He doesn't know us. What a strange look he has in his eyes."

As gently as possible Marion forced the missionary to lie back upon the pillow. But he was excited, and held her hand fast.

"That word doesn't look right, Martha," he said. "It seems strange."

"What word?" Marion asked, hoping to detect some gleam of intelligence in his wandering mind.

"No, no," he continued, "that's not the word I want. Where is it? Ah, I have it!" His eyes brightened, and a smile illumined his face. "Love—that's it! 'Greater love hath—'" He paused abruptly, drew his hand quickly from Marion's, and pointed excitedly with his forefinger straight before him. "They're coming!" he cried. "I see them; they're on the trail; they'll be here soon! Thank God, my flock is coming back, and Zell is with them! Don't you see her, Martha? Little Zell, who left us; she is coming home again!"

With a cry of grief, the half-breed girl turned and fled from the room. A few minutes later Marion found her curled up in a corner weeping as if her heart would break. The nurse laid a gentle hand upon the girl's shoulder, but she threw it off and shrank back from the touch.

"Oh, I am bad, bad!" she moaned. "Did you hear what he said? He was longing for me all the time, and I never knew it."

"There, there, dear; you can't help it now," Marion soothed. "You made a mistake, but he will forgive you when he gets well."

"But will he get well, Miss? Maybe he will die, and he will never know how sorry I am."

"Let us hope that he will get better," Marion encouraged. "When the doctor comes he may be able to do something for him."

"Oh, I hope he will come soon, Miss. He will tell me how Tim is getting along. But suppose he is dead! If he is, then I shall die too. I don't want to live with Tim gone."

"Don't worry too much about that, dear," and Marion put her arm around the girl as she spoke. "The doctor will do all he can, never fear, and our Heavenly Father will do the rest. Have you prayed for your lover, Zell?"

"I have tried to, Miss, but I guess my prayers will do no good. I have been so bad that the Lord wouldn't listen to me."

"He certainly will, Zell. He has promised to hear us when we come to Him. Did He not say, 'Call upon Me in the time of trouble and I will hear thee'? Isn't that His promise? Why, then, should you doubt His word?"

"Why, Miss, you talk just like Mrs. Norris used to. She often told us the same thing. But she was a good woman, and her prayers were not all answered. Why was that?"

"Are you sure they were not, Zell?"

"I am certain, Miss. She prayed for the Indians that they might all be good. But look how they have wandered, and have nearly all left the mission."

"Perhaps her prayers will be answered, Zell," Marion quietly replied. "She prayed that you might come back, and be a good girl. And here you are, changed, and sorry for what you have done."

"Did she pray for me?" the girl asked in surprise. "How do you know that? You never met Mrs. Norris, did you?"

Marion made no immediate reply. She picked up a cup and spoon from the table, and going to the stove dipped out some soup from a steaming pot. Then going into the bedroom, she offered a little to the missionary, who was now lying very still.

"Take this," she said; "it will do you good."

As the man paid no heed to her words, she filled the spoon with soup and held it to his lips. Like a child he opened his mouth and drank it, the first nourishment he had taken since the shooting. In this manner Marion was able to feed him, and she gave him all the cup contained. This, she felt, was an encouraging sign, and she returned to the other room with greater hope for the invalid. She found Zell just where she had left her, with hands clasped before her, and quietly sobbing.

"Come, dear," Marion brightly began. "I want to read something to you. The good missionary took a little nourishment, and seems to be resting comfortably.

"We can spend a cozy evening together in this nice warm room."

Going over to the table, she picked up the book she had so hurriedly laid down, and opened it. She then sat down upon a rough bench, and motioned Zell to her side. The girl obeyed, and in another minute the two were seated side by side with the light of a nearby candle resting upon their fair faces.

"I am going to read you something from this book," Marion said. "It was written years ago by Mrs. Norris. She wrote something every day, and I feel that it will be perfectly right for us to read some of the beautiful things she recorded here. Would you like to hear them?"

"Oh, indeed I should, Miss," was the eager reply. "I have often wondered what she wrote in that book. She seemed so fond of it."

Marion passed over the part of the journal which told of the trials of the missionaries when they first reached The Gap, until she came to an entry which she knew would interest the girl. It was the day before Christmas, and this the writer noted.

"My dear husband has just come home after an absence of nearly two weeks. He has been visiting the Indians, and many of them have come back with him for the treat, and the wonderful Christmas services we are planning to have. And what a present he brought with him—a little girl, a half-breed! She is a dear little thing, and has such sweet ways. She is only seven years old, yet she is exceptionally bright and smart for her age. She is a real Christmas gift, the best I ever had. How I have always longed for a child to care for, and perhaps she may be the first-fruit

of the mission school we hope to start for the native children. She has such a pretty name—Zell——’ ”

Here Marion was interrupted by a cry from the girl at her side.

“Was it really me, Miss?” she asked. “Surely Mrs. Norris didn’t write all that about me!”

“Yes, she did, dear, and there is more. Listen: ‘The Indians have been coming in and out of the house all the evening, and we have been so busy. But my mind is so full of the little child that I can hardly think of anything else. She is asleep now in a cozy place I have made for her. My heart is overflowing with gratitude. As I sit here, with the house at last quiet, and Charles reading his letters, which came while he was away, I could sing for joy. But not being able to do that for fear of waking the child, I think of that wonderful psalm, and can understand the feeling of him who wrote it: ‘Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise His Holy Name.’ God grant that this little one brought so unexpectedly to my arms may grow in grace, and in the knowledge and fear of the Lord.’ ”

Thus page after page Marion read, the girl listening with almost breathless interest. The story of the forming of the Indian school was told in detail, the number of children in attendance, their names, and the efforts made to instruct them. Then there was the story of the falling away of the natives, and the great changes that took place at The Gap. Marion read only a portion of this, and when she saw what was written about Zell’s departure, she closed the book and laid it on the table.

“There, I think I’ve read enough this evening,” she said. “You must be sleepy, and want to go to bed.”

"No, no; read more," Zell insisted. "Read about where I ran away from the school."

"How do you know there is anything about that?"

"I am sure there must be. I want to know what Mrs. Norris thought about what I did."

"Perhaps it will make you very sad."

"I do not care, Miss. I want to hear."

Marion did as she was requested, and again opening the book, she turned to the last few pages. Here the dates were far apart, showing that for some time nothing had been recorded. Soiled with tears was the page where the writing once more abruptly began.

" 'I have had no heart to write anything for several weeks' "—so ran the scribbled words, which made the reading difficult. " 'The worst has at last arrived, and Zell, our darling child, is gone! She left us for a white man. Charles can hardly believe it is true, and goes from cabin to cabin searching for her. But I know, and so do the girls in the school. I can hardly write, so full are my eyes with tears. Our house is very lonely now without our darling. May the good Lord keep her safe, and lead her back to us again. I have the feeling that if she does come I shall not be here. I sometimes wonder—' "

"That is all," Marion quietly remarked, as she once more laid aside the book. Her eyes were misty, while Zell's were brimming with tears.

"Oh, why didn't she write more?" the girl impetuously asked. "Why did she stop just there? What was she wondering about? How I should like to know."

"We never shall, dear," Marion replied. "She finished her journal just there."

"She couldn't write any more, Miss; that was the

reason. Her heart was broken because I ran away. I never imagined she would feel like that."

"Do not worry too much about it now, dear," Marion advised. "You are very weak yet. When you are stronger we shall talk it all over. You must go to bed now and get a good sleep. I shall sit up for a while, and watch until Kate comes. She said she would stay with us to-night."

"Do you think the doctor will be here to-morrow?" Zell asked.

"Perhaps so. If he is at Big Chance, it should not take him long to make the journey."

"Oh, I hope he will come soon, and bring good news about Tim. Surely the good Lord won't let Tim die when I want him so much. You understand, don't you, Miss?"

"Indeed I do," Marion replied, giving the girl an affectionate kiss. "Lovers understand many things which are hidden from others. But, there, you must go right to bed. I shall come presently and tuck you in."

CHAPTER 28

Waiting

THAT night Marion had a fairly good sleep, which she sorely needed. It was the first real rest she had enjoyed since leaving Hugo's cabin on the overland trail. She awoke greatly refreshed, and found the Indian woman preparing breakfast. Zell was also awake, and brighter than she had been for days.

"Oh, Miss!" she exclaimed as Marion entered her room, "I've had such a wonderful dream. Tim was standing right by my side, looking so well and strong. I am sure it is a sign that he is all right."

"Let us hope that your dream will come true," Marion replied with a smile. "I, too, had such a nice dream, and almost like yours."

"Was it about the sergeant, Miss?"

"Yes, and he was with us here and we were all so happy. But you had better get up now, dear, for Kate has breakfast almost ready."

Marion then went to see how the missionary was getting along. She found him asleep, although the Indian woman told her that he had talked a great deal during the night, and kept saying things which she could not at times understand.

"Gikhi talk much," she said. "Gikhi sing some tam', all sam' in church. Gikhi pray for Injun, all sam' dis," and she clasped her hands together and cast her eyes upwards. Gikhi good man, eh?"

"He certainly is, Kate. He was always good to the Indians, was he not?"

"Ah, ah, good. De Lord no let Gikhi die, eh?"

"Let us hope not, Kate. He seems better, doesn't he?"

"Mebbe so. Doctor come bimeby. Doctor savvey."

That day was a long one for Marion. She attended to the missionary, and busied herself about the house. Zell was more like her former self, and talked a great deal about the coming of the doctor. She sat much of the time near the little window looking down The Gap in the direction of Big Chance.

"They will come that way," she said, "and I want to be the first to see them. I know they will come to-day, and will bring good news about Tim. The Golden Horn is smiling, and that is another sign that all is well. Do you believe in signs, Miss?"

"No, I cannot truthfully say that I do. Years ago I did, but I have got all over that."

"But I believe in them, Miss," Zell declared. "The Indians have all kinds of signs, and they tell many things by them. They believe in dreams, too. Doesn't the Bible tell about dreams which came true? I often think about the dream which saved the life of little Jesus. If that dream was true, why shouldn't it be so to-day?"

This was more than Marion was able to explain. She merely told the girl that she hoped her dream would come true, and that she would soon have her lover with her. Thus all through the day they waited and watched for the absent ones. Several times the missionary aroused, asked for his wife, and talked about the Indians, and the mission work. He took a little nourishment, but showed no sign that he knew what was

taking place around him. It was only at the close of the day that he became very restless, tried to get up, and talked incessantly. He was seeing wonderful things, so it seemed to the nurse, as she sat and watched him. His eyes glowed, and a beautiful smile would often overspread his face.

All day long Zell sat by the window and watched down The Gap. As the afternoon wore away, and night drew near, she became very anxious, and asked over and over again why the travellers did not come. Then when it became dark she crept into the room where the missionary was lying, and crouched upon the floor with her eyes fixed intently upon the face of the unconscious man. Marion tried to comfort her, but her words seemed to have no effect.

"They will never come!" she moaned. "Something has happened to Tim, and they don't want to tell me. Or maybe they have been lost on that terrible overland trail. A snow-slide may have swept them away."

"You must not get discouraged, dear," Marion replied. "It is a long way to Big Chance and back. Perhaps the doctor was not there, and—and Hugo had to go to Kynox. The doctor will come as fast as he can, let us never doubt that. Let us get supper now, and be ready if they should come this evening."

"I don't want anything to eat, Miss," Zell declared, "and if Tim dies, I never want to eat again. Do hearts sometimes break for grief, Miss? I am sure mine is almost breaking now. I don't believe a girl ever loved anyone as I love Tim."

The girl had risen from the floor and was standing erect now. Her face was flushed, and her dark eyes were filled with tears. Marion had never seen her look so beautiful, and she recorded a silent prayer that the

poor girl might have her lover restored to her again. There was nothing conventional about this girl. She was one with the things of nature, and the untamed spirit of roving natives animated her soul. What she did, she did with tremendous intensity, and her love was as a burning fire that cannot be quenched. Her every movement was full of grace, and there was a remarkable refinement about her entire manner. Never once did Marion hear her utter a wrong word, nor express an improper wish. Her heart seemed pure, and her love a most sacred thing. This was shown as the two sat that night near the stove.

"Is it wrong, Miss, to love as I love?" she suddenly asked.

"Why no, dear. I am certain it is right. Why do you ask such a question as that?"

"Oh, I hardly know," and the girl sighed as she spoke, and placed her right hand wearily to her forehead. "But sometimes I think that my love is so wonderful a thing that it isn't meant for such a bad girl as I am. Perhaps God thinks that it isn't right for me to love Tim as I do."

"That is all nonsense, Zell," Marion chided. "God knows your heart, and what a good girl you really are. You must not think that you are bad, for you are not. I know you ran away from school, but that doesn't mean that you are bad. Let us call it a mistake."

"And you don't think God will punish me by taking Tim away when I want him so much?"

"No dear, God will not do that to punish you, I feel certain. If Tim should die, which we hope and pray he will not, it will not be God's doings, but because a bad man shot him. We must not blame God for what others do. He wants us to live and be happy."

"Oh, I am so glad to hear you say that," the girl replied, her eyes shining with gratitude. "And it is so nice to feel that God will not punish me for what I did. I was afraid he would."

Marion thought of the girl's words as she sat alone that night. Zell was asleep in the little room, and the Indian woman was lying upon the cot near the stove. The house was very quiet, the crackling of the sticks in the stove being the only sound which broke the silence. Marion had been reading again the Journal, but she now let the book lie open in her lap, her mind filled with conflicting thoughts. Strange were the ways of life, she mused. Zell imagined that God punished people for not being good. But what about the earnest missionaries who had toiled so long among the Indians at The Gap? Surely there was no injustice with God. His ways, she knew, were past finding out, although she was certain that He did all things well, and overruled evil for good. Again she picked up the book and began to read at random words written with a trembling hand.

"The Indians are leaving us, being drawn away by the attractions of white men. Only a few come to service now, and no doubt they will soon go, too. We have no children at school now, and the house is very lonely. We do not know what to do to counteract the mischief which has been wrought in our flock. We cannot offer the natives the allurements of the world which seem to appeal to them so strongly. Charles continues his translation work and ministering to the needs of the few Indians who remain, while I potter around the house and do a little reading and writing. My dear husband and I had a long, serious talk this morning, and took our troubles to Him, who has never

failed us yet, and we were greatly comforted. Charles read that beautiful and pathetic story of the Master kneeling alone in Gethsemane, and it cheered us."

Farther on she came to another entry which arrested her attention.

"We were discussing to-day the advisability of giving up our work here, as Tom and Kate are the only Indians who are now with us. We were undecided what to do, whether to go to some other place or stay here, when a remarkable thing happened. My husband was seated at his table with his Bible open before him. Almost unconsciously he kept turning the pages as we talked, and when at last we were silent for a few minutes, each knowing that the time of decision had finally arrived, Charles suddenly bent forward, gave a slight exclamation of astonishment, and fixed his eyes intently upon the page open before him. I never saw such an expression of awe upon his face. He seemed like a man transfigured, and his eyes shone with a wonderful light. He then began to read in a low impressive voice from Ezekiel, 'And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.' So overwhelmed was Charles by these words, that he rose to his feet and paced rapidly up and down the room. 'The Gap, The Gap,' he repeated, 'I must stand in the gap, Martha. The Lord needs me here. This is The Gap, the place where I must remain. Wonderful, isn't it, that I should be led to that passage? The Lord shall not want for a man to stand in The Gap here in the north, so long as I live.' He urged me to go home to England, but I would not listen to such an idea. My place is by the side of my dear husband, for the Lord sometimes

needs a woman to stand in the gap as well as a man. We then both knelt down and thanked God for His guidance in our time of perplexity. Our duty is now clear, and we look forward to the future with trustful hearts."

Marion's eyes were dim with tears as she finished reading this soul-stirring record of a noble woman. Those words inspired her, and made her own troubles seem small. And Mrs. Norris had stood in the gap, dying at her post of duty. Surely such faith and self-sacrifice would not be in vain. With the wreck of all their work around them, two great souls could still go forward in simple trust that all things would come out right at last. Now one was gone, and the other was lying battling for life in his little room. Would there ever come an answer to their prayers? she wondered, or had they toiled in vain?

She was aroused by the missionary's voice. It was so different from the last few days that she was somewhat startled. Hurrying to the bedroom, she saw the old man's eyes fixed intently upon the door with a wondering look. Seeing her, he smiled.

"What has happened?" he asked in a feeble but natural voice. What am I doing here in bed? And who are you? I never saw you before."

"You have been very ill," Marion explained, going to his side. "I am a nurse, Marion Brisbane, from Kynox."

"I have been ill, you say? That is strange. Ah, now I begin to understand. It was that man with the revolver. Did he shoot me? Yes, I remember. He wanted something I had. Did he get it?"

"What was it?" Marion asked.

"The ring Hugo, the trapper, gave me to keep. Oh, I hope it is safe."

"There, now, you must not worry, Mr. Norris," Marion replied. "Just keep still, and I shall get you something to eat. You are very weak yet. The doctor should be here soon."

"What doctor?"

"Dr. Rainsford, from Kynox. He should arrive at any minute now."

"Who went for him?"

"A friend of yours, Hugo, the trapper."

"He did!"

Marion at length left the room and soon returned bringing some rich broth she had in readiness. She placed the cup on a small table by the bed.

"Drink this," she quietly ordered. "You must be hungry."

"I suppose I am," the missionary replied as he complied with her request. "It is good of you to wait upon me. I am not used to such attention, and it seems strange."

"You will have to get used to it, then, Mr. Norris. I am your nurse, and am in the habit of being obeyed."

The missionary smiled as he sipped the broth, and toyed with the spoon in the cup. He was very weak, and the effect of speaking and moving exhausted him. This Marion saw, and she turned to leave him, when he touched her gently on the arm.

"Don't go yet," he said. "I want to ask you a question. I am weak, I know, but tell me, have the Indians come back yet?"

"Not yet," was the reluctant reply.

"You think they are coming, then?" There was a note of intense eagerness in the old man's voice.

"Let us hope so, Mr. Norris. Perhaps they will be here in time for Christmas." This was merely a surmise on Marion's part, but she had to say something of an encouraging nature.

"Yes, I believe they will be here for Christmas," and the man's face brightened. "They always came then, and we had such a happy time. Martha, my dear wife, always looked forward to this blessed season. I feel certain that my flock will come back. I can see them trooping in from the distant camping-places, all eager to outstrip one another. Yes, they will surely come."

Leaving him with his vision, Marion slipped out of the room. She knew that he should be quiet, and she also wished to be by herself, that she might think. She was puzzled at the missionary's unexpected recovery. She sat down near the stove, and leaned back against the wall, for she felt unusually tired. Had the man been shot? she asked herself. Perhaps the bullet had not entered his body as she had imagined. It might have struck him a glancing blow on the head. She should have questioned Tom, the Indian, more closely. Was it possible that after all he might recover, and live to stand in The Gap for some time yet?

After a while she rose to her feet, moved softly to the door of the bedroom, and looked in. What she saw gave her great hope. The invalid's eyes were closed, and his sleep was as that of a little child.

CHAPTER 29

Good News

GREY dawn found Marion at work preparing breakfast. There was plenty of food, for Sergeant North had attended to that before leaving. The missionary's cache had been drawn upon, and the Indian woman had brought what she could spare from her own cabin. Marion knew that Zell would soon be awake and ready for something to eat. She wished to have the girl well and strong for the trip back to Big Chance, which she knew would have to be made ere long. Then the missionary needed more nourishing food that he, too, might gain in strength. She also had the absent ones in mind. At any minute her father and the doctor might arrive, or the sergeant and the constable. Deep in her heart she was more anxious about John's return than any one else. She was not so much concerned now about the missionary, as he seemed to be somewhat improved. Anyway, he was being well looked after. But with John, it was different. She knew of his great daring when in the line of duty, and who could tell what might happen when he overtook the villain he was pursuing? Suppose he should be shot! The thought was terrible, and her hands trembled as she lifted a kettle from the stove.

At that instant a sound outside arrested her attention. Then she heard the jingle of bells, and voices of men. In another minute the door was thrust suddenly open and her father entered. Closing the door to keep

out the cold, he stood for a few seconds peering keenly before him, accustoming his eyes to the dimness within. Marion could see him plainly, and how big and powerful he appeared. What a tower of strength he seemed to her just then. He was heavily hooded, and the frost hung thick upon his beard and eyelashes. Never was she more delighted to see anyone, and she hurried quickly toward him.

"Oh, father," she cried, "I am so glad you have come. Is the doctor with you?"

"Yes, he is here safe and sound. He is looking after the dogs, so will be in presently. How is the missionary?"

"Much better, I believe. He has regained consciousness. But tell me, how is Tim, Zell's lover?"

"Oh, he's getting along great, and should be well in a few weeks. The doctor got there just in the nick of time. My, he did a clever piece of work."

Hugo had scarcely finished speaking when with a great cry of joy Zell darted from her bedroom, and rushed toward the trapper. She had slept fully dressed so as to be ready should the doctor arrive in the night. Her eyes were shining and her face beaming with joy. Hugo looked at her with admiration.

"Well, bless my heart!" he exclaimed. "This doesn't look like the little girl I left so sick but a few days ago."

"Is Tim really better?" Zell asked, unheeding his comment. "Say it again."

"Yes, he is better, thanks to the Good Lord and the doctor. But he needs something yet to make the cure complete."

"And what is that?" Zell almost breathlessly inquired.

"A little lass who scurried away and got into no end of trouble. When she gets back to Big Chance Tim will be all right. But, hello! what's the matter? What are you blushing about?"

Hugo was in great spirits, an entirely changed man from the sullen and morose rover of the trails. He seemed like one who had escaped from prison, and was enjoying to the full his unaccustomed freedom. Marion watched him with wonder and secret rejoicing. He was like the father she had known as a little girl. He had the same hearty voice and the ringing laugh. His very presence inspired confidence and good will.

In a few minutes the doctor entered and was given a hearty greeting by Marion and Zell. He was a splendid type of man, a great trailsman, and beloved by miners and Indians alike. He had given up a good practice to come to the north to assist in the medical work which was being carried on at Kynox and other centres. No distance was too great, and difficulties were as nothing in his work of loving mercy. The most abject native would receive from him the same care as the most important person in the country. To the hospital at Kynox he had been a tower of strength, and everywhere the miners and prospectors swore by the word and honor of Doctor Stephen Rainsford.

"This is the life I like best," he had once said to a man who had asked him why he was willing to bury himself in the north. "It is the kind of service that suits my make-up. Cities and towns outside are crowded with doctors, too many, in fact, but in a country such as this they are very scarce."

Dr. Rainsford examined the missionary most thor-

oughly. He would not touch a bite of food until he had done so, hungry and tired though he was.

"You are right in your conjecture, Miss Brisbane," he at last informed the nurse. "The bullet did not enter his body, as you at first supposed. It evidently struck him a glancing blow on the head, judging from the mark I find there. Then I find another mark which might have been made when he fell, hitting, no doubt, the table as he did so. It was certainly a narrow escape."

"It was the Lord's doing," the missionary quietly replied. "Only His intervention saved me, for the revolver was fired pointblank at my head. He must have work for me still to do or else He would not have spared me. It is good of you, doctor, to come here on my behalf. I have often heard of your noble deeds. I hope you will be comfortable in this humble abode, and make yourself perfectly at home."

This Dr. Rainsford was well able to do. He was the life of the mission house, and as he and Hugo ate the breakfast which Marion had prepared, he related amusing incidents of the trip from Big Chance.

"My friend Hugo, here, set me a hard pace," he laughingly remarked. "He was in such a hurry that he would hardly stop to eat or to sleep."

"You seemed to be hungry about all the time," the trapper laughingly replied. "You wanted to stop every hour or so for something to eat. We were entirely out of grub when we got here."

"Did you pass the place where we had that terrible experience with the snow-slide?" Marion asked. "I shudder whenever I think of it."

"We did, although the last storm covered up the great scar. I was in fear of my life when coming along

that trail. We heard a great roar one night and I am certain it was another avalanche. We shall not go back that way, if I have anything to say about it."

"When do you expect to return, doctor?"

"As soon as possible. I may be needed at Kynox. I have been away for some time."

"Are the nurses getting on all right?"

"Very well, indeed. But they were worrying about you when I left."

"Can't you wait until Sergeant North and the constable return?" Marion asked. "It would be so nice for us all to go back together."

"When do you expect them, Miss Brisbane?"

"I do not know. It is impossible to tell how long it will take them to capture the man they are after. You have heard about the murder near the C. D. Cut-off, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, it is the talk of the entire country. And, by the way, I have something which will interest you in connection with that murder. It is an article in a paper I received just before I left Kynox. And I have several letters for you, too, I had forgotten all about them."

Rising and crossing the room, he picked up a small leather bag he had deposited on a bench, opened it, fumbled around and at last brought forth a package.

"That's for the sergeant," he explained. "Letters galore. Ah, here's yours, Miss Brisbane," he continued as he handed to her several letters tied together with a string.

Eagerly Marion cut the string and examined the letters. By the postmarks she had a fairly good idea from whom they came, friends she had known in other days, and who had never forgotten her. What a feast she

would have reading their messages when alone by herself, if ever that time should come.

"Yes, here's the paper at last." It was the doctor speaking, and glancing up, Marion saw him unfolding a copy of the little weekly paper published at Swift Stream. "Now, listen to this," he continued, "and let me know what you make of it." He then began to read.

"The C. D. Cut-off Murder.

"A recent despatch throws new light upon the murder of William Haines and his wife which took place a short time ago near the C. D. Cut-off. From the description of them which has been received it seems that they were living under an assumed name. They were two of a noted band of thieves, but having changed their manner of living they fled to the Yukon, buried themselves in the wilderness. Here Haines, whose real name was Marson, cut wood for the river steamers, and rocked out gold on the river bars during the summer. He and his wife were noted for their hospitality to all travellers along the river. The murderer has not yet been found, although a certain man is under suspicion. The Police have information that may lead to his conviction should he be found. It seems that this man knew Haines and his wife years ago, and was himself one of the notorious band of thieves. He evidently discovered the whereabouts of his former companions, and visited them. What led to the fearful crime is not as yet known. It is surmised, however, that the Haines possessed considerable money, or valuable jewellery, and a quarrel over this may have been the cause of the murder.' "

"That's it, I believe," Hugo interrupted. "There

was a ring, and I found it, a valuable one, if I am not greatly mistaken."

"You!" the doctor exclaimed, nearly dropping his paper in his excitement. "Why, then, didn't you give it to the Police? What did you do with it?"

"Kept it, of course, doctor, until I found someone I could trust. There were several reasons why I didn't hand it over to the Police. And, besides, I wanted to keep it myself until I found the man who killed Bill Haines and his wife, and then—" Hugo's eyes flashed with the old fire as he abruptly ended, and stood gazing straight before him.

"Have you the ring now?" Marion asked. Her voice was low, and the old dread was upon her. Would not the possession of the ring implicate her father in the crime? How could he clear himself?

"No, I have not the ring," Hugo replied. "I gave it to the missionary to keep for me. But I cannot find it anywhere. It must be hidden in a very secure place, or else it has been stolen."

"It has been stolen."

These low impressive words caused all to start and look quickly around. What they saw was almost unbelievable. There in the doorway stood the missionary, white and haggard. His eyes were bright and filled with the light of determination. He tottered and leaned against the door post for support. The doctor stepped forward to assist him.

"You should not be here," he advised. "You are not strong enough to walk yet. Let me help you back to bed."

"No, no, I must stay up for a while. I shall soon be all right. I have something to tell you, and the Indians

will soon be here, so I must be ready to receive them. Help me to my chair, please."

Seeing how thoroughly determined the old man was, the doctor did as he was requested, and assisted him to his chair which Hugo had drawn up close to the stove. Wearily the missionary sank down and his head drooped forward. Marion at once brought him a drink of hot broth which when he had taken he felt stronger.

"Thank you so much," he murmured. "You are all very good to me. I shall be stronger in a few minutes. I am weaker than I thought I was. Now, about the ring. You gave it to me, Hugo, to keep. But it was stolen by Bill, the Slugger. When I wouldn't give it to him, he shot me. That is all I remember. He must have taken it from my pocket."

"A cry from Zell startled them. The girl was standing before the missionary with an expression of great fear upon her face.

"What is the matter, dear?" Marion asked, going to her side.

"It was Bill who killed Bill Haines and his wife," she said in a hoarse whisper. "Tim told me so. But don't let Bill know that I told you, or he will kill me."

"Don't you worry about that, girl," Hugo replied. "Bill won't touch you. He'll have all that he can attend to without meddling with you."

Just at that moment the door suddenly opened and Kate entered. She was unusually excited, and the expression upon her face was one of great joy. She crossed the room and stood before the missionary.

"Injun come," she said. "More bimeby."

"I know it, Kate," was the quiet reply. "The Lord told me that they were coming. Heat the church and ring the bell at service time."

"Church warm, Gikhi. Kate no let fire go out."

"What! did you keep the fire going?" Mr. Norris asked in surprise.

"Ah, ah, Kate keep church warm."

"Why? I didn't tell you to do that."

"Gikhi pray for Injun, eh? Gikhi pray Injun come bimeby?"

"Yes, Kate, I always prayed that the Indians might return some day."

"Ah, ah, good," and the woman's face beamed with pleasure. "Kate know Lord hear Gikhi. Kate have church warm when Injun come."

Impulsively the missionary reached out and caught Kate's rough hand in his. There were tears in his eyes, and he was deeply impressed by this woman's remarkable faith and unswerving devotion.

"God bless you, Kate," he murmured. "Your faith is wonderful."

Marion's eyes were misty as she stood silently witnessing this moving scene. Even Hugo and the doctor were deeply affected. They turned away, that their emotion might not be noted. But with Zell it was different. She dropped upon her knees before the missionary, caught his disengaged hand in hers and pressed it to her lips. She uttered no sound, but her action was more eloquent than words, and the missionary understood and was glad.

CHAPTER 30

His Message of Farewell

THE missionary was greatly interested over the arrival of the natives. He insisted upon sitting at the little window facing the village where through a small clear space he could watch all that was going on outside. Zell stood near and at times she would draw his attention to Indians who passed on their way to their lodges.

"Look, Gikhi, there are Slim Jim and his wife. They seem to be glad to get back. And, oh, there is Tommy Titsu with his mother! How big he is. He has grown so much since he left the school."

And truly it was an inspiring scene upon which their eyes rested. The entire place had suddenly become animated as if by magic. Men, women, and children were hurrying to and fro, and dogs innumerable were scurrying about. But so far not one of the Indians had come to the mission house, although all had glanced in that direction in passing. At length Kate entered and approached the missionary. Upon her face was an expression of deep concern.

"What is the matter, Kate?" the missionary asked.

"Tom no come," she replied. "Tom die, mebbe."

"Why, what makes you think so, Kate?"

"Injun say Tom lost. Injun drink hootch, drive Tom from lodge. Injun no find Tom."

"Where was that?"

"In hills. Bad white man bring hootch. Injun drink. Tom say 'stop.' Injun hit Tom on head. Tom go 'way, die, mebbe."

"Where are the white men now, Kate?"

"P'lice ketch 'um. Injun bring white man to Gap."

"Are they here?" Marion eagerly asked. "Have the Police come in?"

"No P'lice come," the woman replied. "Injun bring white man."

"Do they know where the Police are?"

"Injun no savvey. Chase Bill, mebbe."

Although Marion was interested in the coming of the Indians, she was greatly disappointed because the sergeant had not returned. Hugo noticed this, and whispered a few words to the doctor, and together they left the building. They were gone for about an hour, and when they returned they explained where they had been.

"We've been interviewing those white men," the doctor announced, "and a queer story they relate. They told us that they were trading with the natives when two policemen came upon them, seized them and sent them to The Gap under a strong Indian guard. That was their yarn. But we learned from several natives that they were hootch pedlars, and had stirred up a large camp of natives to wild frenzy, and were making things lively. They also cast out Tom, the Indian, when he tried to show them the error of their ways."

"Did they harm the sergeant and the constable?" Marion anxiously asked.

"Indeed they didn't," Hugo replied. "From what we gather those two men struck terror into the hearts of the entire band by their stern and prompt action. How I wish I had been there. Trust Sergeant North

to handle a serious situation. He has never failed yet."

"Perhaps it will be different, though, when he meets Bill, the Slugger," Marion suggested. "He is a desperate man, so I have heard."

"He may be all that, but what can he do against those two sleuth-hounds of the trails? He won't have even a look-in."

"But perhaps he will see them coming, hide, and shoot them down before they can do anything."

Both Hugo and the doctor laughed at her fears, and told her not to worry. But worry she did, and she imagined the sergeant lying in the snow with no one to help him. She told herself that she was very foolish, but she could not banish the thought. Anyway, she felt that she must hide her fears, so she said nothing more, and went quietly about her work.

During the afternoon a number of Indians came to the house, and to these the missionary talked in the native tongue. Marion could not understand anything of the conversation, but Zell knew, and she interpreted in a whisper what was being said.

"The Gikhi is saying how pleased he is to see the Indians back," she explained to the nurse. "He is asking how they made out with their trapping, and if they brought in many pelts. They are telling him that they have done very well, but that they haven't had as good success as they used to when they held services every night in their lodges. They are asking the Gikhi to forgive them, and he says he will, but that they must ask God to forgive them. They say they will, and are now asking for a service to-night in the church. The Gikhi tells them how pleased he is, and that he will be there to speak to all the Indians."

When the natives had gone, the missionary showed signs of great weariness, so the doctor advised him to lie down and rest.

"You must be strong for the service to-night," he informed him. "You are weak yet, remember, and you must be in a fit condition to speak to your flock."

"You are quite right," the old man agreed, as he allowed himself to be led to his little room. "I must speak to them, for there are many things I have to say. This has been a wonderful day, and the Lord is bringing marvellous things to pass. I have lived to see my flock return. Oh, if my dear wife were only here to be a sharer of my joy!"

During the remainder of the afternoon the house was kept very quiet so as not to disturb the missionary. Hugo and the doctor both had a sleep, which they needed. Marion and Zell sat by the window watching what was taking place outside until darkness shrouded the land. They then lighted several candles, and Zell poured out to the nurse the thoughts which were uppermost in her mind, and so near her heart.

"The Gikhi will need someone to look after him, Miss, and I am going to stay with him. Tim, I know, will come, too, and the Gikhi will marry us and we can live right here. I want to make up for the wrong I did, and show the Gikhi that I am a good girl."

"That is a splendid plan, Zell," Marion replied. "But I thought that you were planning to go outside. You always wanted to go, didn't you?"

"I want to do that more than anything in the world except to marry Tim," was the candid confession. "But it is my duty to stay here and look after the Gikhi. I long to see the wonderful things which Tim has told me about in the big cities outside. But while

the Gikhi is alive, I am going to stay and care for him—that is, if he will let me.”

“You are a good girl, Zell,” Marion whispered, as she placed her arm lovingly around her companion and drew her close to her. “I wish you could go with me when I leave this country. I shall miss you very much.”

“And will you go away, Miss?” Zell asked. “Oh, how can I get along without you? You have been so good to me. I shall never forget you.”

Shortly before the appointed time for service, the missionary was up and eager to reach the building. He partook of a little food, and when well wrapped in his big fur coat, he was assisted by Hugo and the doctor out of the house and across the open. He stepped out bravely at first, but by the time the church was reached he was very weak. He smiled as he entered the building, which was filled with natives, some being forced to stand. He walked slowly up the aisle, and when he reached the little vestry, he sank down upon a small bench against the wall. He was determined to wear his robes, and Marion, who had followed, assisted him with his long white surplice, which came almost to his feet.

“My stole, my stole; don’t forget that,” he reminded. “There it is hanging on that peg. The Indians always like to see me fully robed.”

He was trembling with excitement as he made his way out of the vestry into the chancel. Here he knelt down, and when he had risen to his feet, he announced a hymn, and in a quavering voice started the tune in the native language. The Indians followed, and soon all were singing in the heartiest manner. To Marion this was all very wonderful, and she knew that the

Indians were thoroughly enjoying themselves. Then followed the service, after which the missionary began his address. He leaned against the lectern for support, and it was only his excitement which enabled him to stand at all. He spoke very impressively for some time, his voice growing weaker every minute. Marion longed to speak to him, and advise him to desist, but his animated face and the marvellous light in his eyes restrained her. He seemed to her like some unearthly being. His white hair, flowing beard, and tall form made a most impressive scene in that dimly-lighted building. He had his message to deliver, and it would be almost sacrilege to interrupt him.

At length he stopped, placed his hand wearily to his forehead, and then began to speak in English.

"I wish to say a few words to you, my kind white friends," he said. "This service is the direct answer to my prayers. I have waited long for this occasion, and I knew that the Lord would hear, and bring this to pass. At times I was tempted to leave this place and go elsewhere. But I was determined that the Lord would not be without a man to stand in The Gap. I have stood here for long years, and the Lord has been very good. I can say like that worthy man of old, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared—' "

He suddenly stopped, his face turned deathly white, his hands groped as if for support, and then he dropped upon the floor right at the foot of the lectern. With a startled cry, Marion darted to his side, while Hugo and the doctor hurried forward. The latter knelt upon the floor and quickly examined the prostrate man. For a few minutes a complete silence pre-

veiled. The Indians stood as statues, awe-struck by the scene before them. At length the doctor rose to his feet, his face very grave. He stood as if dazed. Marion noticed this, and touched him lightly on the arm.

"Can't you do anything for him?" she asked.

"No, he is beyond earthly aid," he replied in a low whisper.

"We must tell the Indians and get them out of the church."

So absorbed was Marion with what had just taken place that she noticed nothing else. She stood bewildered and perplexed, not even heeding the light tread of moccasined feet up the aisle. But when a big tall form stood by her side, she glanced quickly around, and when she saw Sergeant North standing there it was only with difficulty that she suppressed a cry of joy and astonishment. The next instant a strong arm was placed around her, and silently the two stood and looked steadfastly upon the dead man. Although greatly saddened with what had just taken place, Marion's heart beat fast at the thought that John was safe and once more with her. She knew that the missionary had served his life nobly and well, and that he had died in harness, and in the very place where he would have wished to die, surrounded by his returned flock for whom he had given his life. It surely was not wrong for her to feel happy on such an occasion with her loved one with her again.

And as they stood there, Old Tom, Kate, and Zell came slowly forward, and stood looking upon their beloved Gikhi. Marion was impressed at the quietness of their manner, and the expression of awe and reverence upon their faces. At a word from the doctor,

Tom turned and spoke briefly to the Indians. In a few minutes they were out of the church and hurrying to their own lodges.

"Perhaps you had better go back to the mission house, Miss Brisbane," the doctor suggested. "The sergeant might as well go with you. Hugo, Tom, and I can do all that's necessary now."

The sergeant at once took a step forward, faced the missionary lying before him, and gave the military salute.

"To a noble man," he simply explained. He then turned, took Marion by the arm, and together they moved down the aisle, and out of the church.

CHAPTER 31

Plans

EARTH to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” Reverently the doctor read the words to the committal of the Burial Service, while Hugo stood near and sprinkled the earth upon the rough box which contained the mortal remains of Charles Norris. The Indians had nearly all arrived and were crowded about the open grave. They had lost their best earthly friend, and their sad faces showed how fully they realised the fact. Marion, with Zell, stood near the grave with her father on one side and the sergeant on the other, with the constable just behind. Close by was another grave, marked with a simple wooden cross, bearing only the name of Martha Norris, and the date of her death. As Marion looked at the emblem of salvation she thought of the life which the woman had led as revealed by the Journal she had left. Soon there would be another cross, and in years to come strangers would read the inscriptions, and wonder, perhaps. But the Indians would remember, she felt sure, and would pass on from generation to generation the story of those two pioneers of the Gospel at The Gap.

John North, too, was thinking deeply. He had not spoken again of the deep things of his heart since that day out in the mountains. Marion knew nothing of all this, although she was surprised at his fervent “Amen” when the doctor had finished reading the

Burial Service. But as she turned away from the grave and walked slowly back to the mission house, he told her all. It was the confession of a man who had fought a hard fight against his doubts, and had conquered. There was little of the sentimental about North, but his body trembled and his voice became somewhat husky as he talked. Among other things he told of the impression made upon him by the sight of the missionary maintaining his post at The Gap, and the thoughts which had come to him on the mountain trail. He had not finished his story when they reached the mission house and entered. Then it was that Marion threw her arms impetuously around his neck, and in words broken with emotion told him of her joy at the great change that had come into his life.

"It is almost too good to be true," she said. "How I have longed and prayed that it might come some day, but I had no idea it would be so soon."

"It is due in a large measure to you, sweetheart," the sergeant acknowledged, giving her an affectionate kiss. "It was your love which first began to warm the coldness of my heart. I thought that such a thing was impossible until I met you. Then all that followed were like so many links in the wonderful chain of faith. I shall never forget that terrible night I spent with that raving maniac in that cabin. I comprehended then as never before the hopeless nature of unbelief and disobedience to the higher life of the Master. I shall tell you sometime of the wonderful thoughts that came to me as I watched by that wretched man. They are almost too sacred to mention, but I shall reveal them to you some day. Then when we reached The Gap in time to attend that service, and listened to the missionary's farewell words, and later looked upon his

face so calm in death, the last strand of doubt was broken. What a difference between that man of God and the wretched raving creature we have confined in the patrol house over yonder. That missionary standing at his post of duty, or 'in the gap,' as he termed it, has had a far more reaching effect than he ever knew. His remaining at his post, true and faithful, undaunted by failure, praying and trusting, was an important link in saving my soul. There, I'm afraid that I have tired you with all this. Anyway, it relieves me to have someone to speak to."

"Don't think that you have tired me, John," Marion replied. "You have no idea how happy you have made me by telling me all this."

No longer did they have time for further conversation, as steps sounded outside, and Hugo and the doctor entered, with Zell following close behind. By their quiet manner and sober faces it was easy to tell how deeply they had been affected by the service they had just attended.

"We have done all we can," the doctor remarked as he sat down somewhat wearily in a chair near the stove. "I have attended many funerals in my life, but none ever appealed to me like the one I have just witnessed. It was the grandest of them all. As I stood there watching the Indians fill in the grave, I thought of Stevenson's touching words:

" 'Under the wide and starry sky
Dig my grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I lay me down with a will.
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter is home from the hill.' "

"You can quote poetry as neatly as Rolfe," the sergeant remarked. "You two are well mated. He should be here to cap your verse."

"No doubt he could do it better, sergeant, for I understand he is filled with poetry. That piece I quoted is about all I remember, and it seems suitable to the death of that grand old man."

As the afternoon was now well advanced, Marion and Zell began to prepare supper. When the meal was ready and all gathered at the table, the constable arrived. He looked very tired and worn, but quite cheerful.

"My, I'm glad to be out of hearing of that maniac," he remarked, as he removed his cap and outer coat. "He's getting worse all the time, and the swelling in his leg is very bad. I believe it will finish him."

"Is he well guarded?" the sergeant asked.

"Yes. Several Indians are looking after him."

"What are you going to do with him?" Hugo enquired.

"Take him to Kynox," the sergeant replied. "It will be a hard and disagreeable trip. But Rolfe will take several Indians along. You must get away early in the morning, Tom," he reminded, turning to the constable. "Get everything ready to-night."

"I have made all preparations, sergeant, and have secured a fine team of dogs. We shall travel fast."

"Suppose you take my team, sergeant, while I go with Tom," the doctor suggested. "I am in a hurry, too, and the madman might need special attention on the way. There is little I can do, I am well aware, but then one never knows. The rest of you can travel more leisurely."

"Are we to close up this house, and leave it just as

it is?" Marion asked. "What a pity there is no one to take the missionary's place and continue his work."

"Oh, there will be some one ready to come, never fear," the sergeant replied. "I shall notify the Bishop and most likely he will send a man here. We need not worry about that just now. The Indians will remain loyal, I feel quite certain. They have been taught a severe lesson."

All through the day Hugo had been very quiet, speaking seldom, and apparently wrapped in serious thought. But that night as they all gathered around the stove, he filled, lighted his pipe, and looked upon the little group.

"I suppose this will be the last night we shall spend together for some time," he began. "Zell will marry Tim and live outside, so her lot in life will be settled. The doctor will still carry on his good work among the needy, and will win more jewels in his crown. Rolfe will develop into a full-fledged poet. Not likely he hears what I am saying, as he is so busy writing—a masterpiece, no doubt. Now, that leaves three of us, and what are we to do?"

"Two will get married as soon as they can, if I am not mistaken," the doctor replied with a twinkle in his eye.

"Oh, not for some time yet," Marion declared. "At least, not until John leaves the Force."

"And when will that be?" Hugo enquired.

"Next May," the sergeant replied. "My time will be up then, and I am going to leave. I am getting tired of this roving life, and have been at it too long already. I should have left years ago."

"Next May, eh? Well, that will suit fine," and

Hugo blew a cloud of smoke into the air. "Now, what are you going to do then?"

"I have not the least idea. Go outside, I suppose, and begin all over again. The outlook is not very bright, I assure you."

"And having a wife will make it all the more difficult, eh?"

"Perhaps so. But something will turn up."

"Now, suppose something should turn up here before you go out, how would that suit you?"

"Very well, indeed. But what do you mean?"

"How would you like to do some mining?"

"Not on your life, unless I can strike something rich. I do not feel inclined to spend the rest of my days following the will o' wisp of gold. I have seen too much of it. Why, there are many men wandering about this country hoping and hoping in vain for a rich find."

"But suppose the gold is already found, what then?"

"That would make a big difference."

"Certainly it would, and that's why I have mentioned it. Now listen. I know where there is gold, plenty of it. I struck it rich several years ago in a creek away to the south of us, and I am the only one who knows where it is."

"You did!" The sergeant as well as all the others were keenly interested now. Even Rolfe paused in his writing to listen.

"Yes, I struck it rich," Hugo repeated, "but never intended to make use of it. I never expected to have any need of it, and did not report my discovery. During those years when I thought that I was being followed by the Police I was very vindictive and gloated over the thought that I knew where there was gold,

and it was known to me alone. At times I longed to tell some poor unfortunate devils where it was, but I knew that others would reap the benefit, so I said nothing. Perhaps it was just as well, otherwise we would not have it to look forward to now."

"Where is this creek of which you speak?" the sergeant asked.

"That must remain a secret until we are ready to begin work," Hugo replied with a smile. "There are several of us here, and it might unintentionally leak out. But the gold is there, and it will keep a while longer. I have samples of it in one of my cabins which I shall show you some day. When the time is ripe, I shall notify you all here, even Marion and Zell, so we can all get in on the ground floor."

"May I have a hand in it, too?" the doctor asked.

"Sure. We shall need a doctor along, and you shall have your share. Then when we get the gold we can either do the mining ourselves, or sell out. There will be no trouble about that."

"Do you think you could live in any other country but this, father?" Marion questioned.

"Just give me a chance, my dear, and you will see how soon I shall hike outside. I have several old scores to settle there which money alone can accomplish. I have been shamefully treated, and never wanted to square up until recently. Oh, yes, I shall make a sensation some day in the smug business world, and money alone can do it. But that's another secret which must remain with me until the right time. There, now, I think I have told you enough for one night. Henceforth I shall be no longer Hugo, the trapper, but 'Hugo, the miner.' How does that sound?"

"Very good," the sergeant replied. "But before

you go to bed you must listen to what Rolfe has written. He has finished his poem of inspiration and is waiting to read it. Come on, Tom, and get through with it."

"It isn't much," the constable replied, "but merely a sample of what I shall do when I get time. These are just a few hurried thoughts I have been turning over in my mind ever since I came to The Gap and saw the old missionary standing bravely at his post of duty. It applies not only to him but to others of his kind. Later I shall lick the verses into proper shape. I have called this poem 'Across the Marches,' suggested by some words I read in an old paper which I happened to pick up in this very house. It was a report of an address given by the Archbishop of Canterbury to a number of missionaries leaving for their distant fields of work. 'We from across the Marches stand by you in your great endeavours,' he said. Those words appealed to me. This is what I have written as my humble tribute:

"Where the land lies dumb in winter, and the mountain trail
is steep,
Where the frost bites like hot iron, and the snow-shoes gall
the feet;
Where the wind rips down the valley with its deadly, hurtling
sting,
And the snow drifts like long breakers in its blinding,
maddening fling,
There across the great lone Marches press the Heralds of
the King."

"Where the frontier shelves to vagueness, and the trails lead
God knows where,
Where the Great Lights hurl their magic through the
twanging midnight air,

There they grope and there they falter, sweeping plain and
crested dome,
Holy Ordered, sturdy cruisers, bringing light where'er they
roam,
Heartened far across the Marches by the Church of God at
Home."

"There they lead and there they battle, there the ranks are
thinned and wan,
But they lift aloft the Banner, and the few still stagger on;
On, with faces white and weary, on, the tide of night to stem;
On, for precious soul-wrought jewels for the Master's diadem;
Church of Christ, across the Marches, lift your pleading
prayers for them."

Slowly Rolfe folded the paper when he had finished, and thrust it into an inside pocket. There was silence for a few minutes, and then Hugo reached out his big right hand.

"Put it there, young man," he said. "I congratulate you for those words. You have struck the right note, eh, sergeant, don't you think so?"

"I do," was the quiet reply. "Tom, I believe you will make a poet yet if you keep at it."

"He is a poet now," Marion declared. "I enjoyed that poem very much, and you will let me have a copy of it, will you not, Mr. Rolfe?"

"Why, yes, Miss Brisbane, I shall be delighted to do so. But suppose you wait until I publish my first book of poems. I shall dedicate it to you if you will let me, and I shall include this poem in the volume."

That night Marion and the sergeant sat long together after the others had gone to rest. There were many things they talked about in low voices, and wonderful were the plans they formed for the future. They were

seated side by side near the stove, their eyes bright and their hearts filled with joy and contentment.

"It is very wonderful how everything has turned out all right at the last," Marion whispered. "This northland will always be very dear to me. It was here I found my long-lost father, and you."

"And wonderful things are still ahead, let us hope," the sergeant replied. "It seems to me that Another has been guiding and leading us together. And may He who has guided us still continue to guide over that long, long trail which lies beyond."

He bent his head and his lips met hers in one ravishing kiss of enduring love.

THE END



